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ABSTRACT

Written by teachers for teachers, this book, the first publication of the Oklahoma Writing Project, contains a collection of articles which describe successful strategies and activities for teaching composition. The articles, which deal with a variety of topics, listed with their authors, are as follows: (1) The Writing Process (Gail E. Tompkins and Lee McKenzie); (2) Building Platforms by Extending Early Writing Stages (Terry O. Phelps); (3) Peer Editing and Instant Grading: A Practical Approach (Stan Fuller); (4) Why Can't They Just Write the Composition? Learning Styles and the Writing Process (Scherie Hall); (5) Freewriting (Lewis Parkhill); (6) Journals Develop a Voice (Lee McKenzie); (7) Short Directed Writings: Another Approach to Journals (Annette Brown); (8) Description (Lewis Parkhill); (9) Reaching Reactive Writers: Using Pictures for Writing (June Richardson); (10) The Arts: An Avenue to Writing (Lillian K. Johnson); (11) Using Vacation Slides in Teaching Composition (Peggy J. Price); (12) Writing: A Key to Understanding the Past (Glenda LoBaugh); (13) We Raised the Titanic (Wilda N. Walker); (14) Letters in the Classroom (Sue Oldham); (15) An Untapped Writing Resource: Wordless Picture Books (Gail E. Tompkins); (16) Comics: A Truly Serious Business (Mona Jean Suter); (17) Developing Critical Skills through Writing, Reading, and Thinking (Jane Cochran); (18) Ineffable (Elsie Lang); (19) Stressing the Discovery Process in Teaching the Term Paper (Peggy J. Price); (20) Sentence-Combining for Fun and Profit (Joan Harper); and (21) Synthesizing Communication Skills in the English Classroom (Alice Gregg). (SR)

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WRITE ANGLES

Strategies for Teaching Composition

Prepared by
Curriculum Section

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OKLAHOMA WRITING PROJECT
The University of Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
John M. Folks, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Foreword

The Oklahoma Writing Project is one of the most successful programs with which the State Department of Education maintains a long standing association. The Department recognizes the benefits that are gained when successful teachers share techniques with their colleagues. *Write Angles* adds another dimension to this network. It provides teachers with a copy of the tested ideas, research and activities for strengthening writing across the curriculum.

We are pleased with the cooperative relationship that the department has established with the University of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Writing Project. We hope that *Write Angles* will be a useful tool for enriching the writing abilities of our students.

John M. Folks
State Superintendent

Education is the most important industry in America. Teaching the students of the 80's is a worthy and demanding calling. Only by sharing successful methods with our fellow teachers can we meet this challenge. One teacher teaching another increases geometrically the influence of each. If one other teacher uses our ideas, then we have touched the future.

Oklahoma Writing Project
Teacher/Consultants

Preface

In 1974, James Gray and his associates at the University of California, Berkeley, organized the Bay Area Writing Project with a new program to improve the teaching of written composition in the California schools. From this modest beginning has come the National Writing Project with more than 120 sites in 46 states and 5 foreign countries.

The first stage of the program brings together a corps of teachers already skilled in the writing process. They demonstrate successful teaching techniques to each other in a summer institute. Then these skilled teachers present their strategies to teachers in in-service workshops in various school districts. In this way, they are furthering an assumption of the project: The best teacher of teachers is another teacher.

In addition to sharing techniques, another primary assumption is that teachers should themselves write. Two teacher consultants from the Oklahoma Writing Project have already had books published. Other teacher consultants have had professional articles published in *English Journal*, *Learning Magazine*, *Instructor*, *Journal of Thought*, *The Reading Teacher*, *Oklahoma English Journal*, *Arizona English Bulletin*, and *Oklahoma Educator*. Still others have written stories, articles, and poetry for various publications. *Write Angles*, the first collection of articles written by Oklahoma teacher consultants, continues the sharing of ideas by teacher/authors.

We congratulate these teachers and Dr. Gail Tompkins, Director of the Oklahoma Writing Project, for this accomplishment.

Frances Dunham and Martha Mills, Co-Directors
Oklahoma Writing Project
1978–1982

The University of Oklahoma

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A message from Frank E. Horton

The Oklahoma Writing Project, begun in 1978 as a cooperative effort between the University of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma State Department of Education, represents almost a decade of contributions to the state's effort to improve composition instruction in Oklahoma schools. As a result of this training effort, more than 100,000 Oklahoma elementary and secondary students have benefitted from improved writing instruction.

Educators across the state are increasingly aware of the importance of writing as a tool for learning in all content areas. The Oklahoma Legislature supported this concept in its mandated program begun in 1986 for the writing assessment of all Oklahoma 10th grade students. This program will be expanded in future years to include 7th grade students and subsequently 3rd grade students.

In *Write Angles* Oklahoma composition teachers share their innovative strategies for teaching composition. I am sure this publication will continue to be a valuable resource for Oklahoma teachers. The University of Oklahoma has been pleased to join with the Oklahoma State Department of Education in the development and production of *Write Angles*

Frank E. Horton
President
The University of Oklahoma

Introduction

How can I get my students to write?
What about integrating reading and writing?
How can I encourage my reluctant writers?
Is it really possible to use writing to teach grammar?
What is the best way to evaluate student writing?

Oklahoma Writing Project teacher/consultants have been traveling to schools across Oklahoma and answering these and other questions about how to teach writing for nearly eight years They've made more than one thousand presentations to elementary and secondary teachers, sharing their "kid-tested" strategies for teaching composition. For *Write Angles*, the first Oklahoma Writing Project publication, teacher/consultants have written twenty-one articles in which they describe some of their most successful strategies and activities for teaching composition.

The first article describes the process approach to writing and provides the focus for *Write Angles*. In contrast to the traditional approach to composition which emphasizes the final written product, the process approach accentuates learning how to write and the activities students engage in as they compose—prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The articles that follow elaborate classroom applications of the writing process stages and explain how to use the process approach for all types of writing, from journals to term papers.

These articles deal with a variety of topics related to composition instruction including meeting the needs of individual students; reaching reluctant writers, developing fluency through freewriting, journal writing, and descriptive writing, and writing across the curriculum as well as integrating writing with the other language arts. In many cases, the teacher/consultants have included student writing samples in their articles to illustrate possible student responses, and it should be pointed out that while some of the samples have been revised and polished, others are unedited rough drafts.

We believe that *Write Angles* provides a new, process-oriented direction for composition instruction in Oklahoma schools. This publication also reinforces a key assumption of the Oklahoma Writing Project, that the best teacher of teachers is another teacher.

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The Writing Process

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In recent years, the emphasis in writing instruction has shifted from the end product to the process involved in creating the product. And the teacher's role has shifted from merely evaluating this end product to working with students throughout each phase of the process. These phases have been delineated by such authorities in the field of composition as James Britton (1978), Janet Emig (1971), Donald Graves (1983), and Donald Murray (1972; 1984). The names given the phases vary, but generally they fall into five categories: (1) prewriting, (2) drafting, (3) revising, (4) editing, and (5) publishing. Labeling and numbering the phases may be misleading, however, since in practice the writing process is not a series of neatly packaged categories. The process is cyclical rather than linear, involving recursive cycles through the phases.

Prewriting: Getting Ready to Write

Prewriting has been the most neglected phase of the writing process, but it is as crucial to writers as a warm-up is to athletes. Donald Murray (1982) believes that up to 70% of writing time should be spent here.

In prewriting, students choose topics and generate ideas. Their writing grows out of their experience, and for the best work, they should choose their own topics. Students also make decisions about their purpose for writing and the audience to whom the composition will be directed.

As they prepare to write, students need to know for whom and why they are writing. Is it primarily for themselves, in order to express their own ideas and emotions? Or are they writing for others, to entertain, to inform, or to persuade to a particular course of action? These audience and purpose considerations will influence the decisions students make throughout the writing process. One of the most important considerations is the form the writing will take: a letter or a poem or a diary entry. The list on the next page suggests a wide variety of legitimate forms available to students. Other considerations include whether they address the reader as an equal or an authority figure, and whether the tone they adopt is whimsical or serious, formal or informal. While these considerations do change as students write and revise, writers must begin with at least a tentative concept of audience, purpose, and form as they move into the drafting phase.

The teacher's role in this phase is twofold: (1) allowing students to participate in decisions about purpose, audience, topic, and form; and (2) providing a variety of idea-gathering activities. These activities, which Graves (1983) calls "rehearsal," are used to help students prepare for writing. They take many forms, including:

Possible Print Formats

acrostics
advertisements
advice columns
anagrams
applications
arguments
autobiographies
ballads
ballots
bibliographies
billboards
biographies
blurbs
book reports
books
brochures
bumper stickers
calligraphy
captions
catalogs
charts
character sketches
cinquain poetry
comics
computer programs
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hink-pinks
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indexes
instructions
interviews
invitations
jokes
journals
lab reports
labels
letters
letters to the editor
limericks
lists
lyrics
magazine articles
maps
menus
mysteries
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T-shirts
TV viewing guides
tables of contents
tall tales
telegrams
telephone directories
texts
thank you notes
thesauruses
titles
tombstones
valentines
weather reports
wills
word-finds
words

- brainstorming
- talking
- note-taking
- observing
- freewriting
- mapping
- journals
- reading
- role playing
- sensory experiences

The articles in this book describe many of these rehearsal activities and explain how they can be used in elementary and secondary writing classes.

In summary, the key features of the prewriting phase are:

- Students write on topics based on their own experiences.
- Students engage in rehearsal activities before writing.
- Students identify the audience to whom they will write.
- Students identify the purpose of the writing activity.
- Students choose an appropriate form for their compositions based on audience and purpose.

Drafting: Getting Ideas Down on Paper

In the process approach to writing, students write and refine their compositions through a series of drafts. They do not begin to write with their compositions already composed in their minds. Instead, they usually begin with tentative ideas which they developed through rehearsal activities. Murray (1978, p. 87) explains that through writing and more writing, students discover what they have to say. "Writers use language as a tool of exploration to see beyond what they know."

Students should use their rough drafts to pour out ideas, with little concern about spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical errors. As they move through successive drafts, students often need to delete sections of text, add others, and rearrange them. They need to learn to draw arrows to move text, to cross out deleted sections, and to cut apart and tape sections together to rearrange text. As it becomes more accessible, the word processor will make this maneuvering much easier.

As students draft their compositions, they may need to modify their earlier decisions about purpose, audience, and especially the form their writing will take. For example, the composition that began as an essay about patriotism may be transformed into a poem. This new format may allow the student to communicate more effectively. This process of modifying earlier decisions also continues into the revising phase.

Teachers should be available during this phase to provide support, to encourage, and to act as a sounding board for ideas and problems. They need not insist on mechanical correctness and neatness at this point. In fact, Nancy Sommers (1982) warns teachers that when they point out mechanical errors during the drafting phase, they send a false message to students that content does not matter so long as the writing is mechanically correct. Later, during editing, students can clear up mechanical errors and put their compositions into a neat, final form.

The two key features of the drafting phase are:

- Students move through successive drafts.
- Students place a greater emphasis on content than on mechanics.

Revising: Refining Ideas

Often student writers break the writing process cycle as soon as they complete a draft of their compositions. Experienced writers, however, know they must turn to readers for reactions, and then revise on the basis of these comments. For revision is not just polishing writing, it is meeting the needs of readers through changing, adding, deleting, and rearranging material.

Conferencing or peer-editing is a good way to obtain these reactions. In this approach, students read their compositions to small groups of classmates, who then respond to them Students need to learn how to react to others' writing in these conferences so that their comments are not destructive. Teachers should insist that students' first response be a positive one, such as telling what they liked best about the piece. Readers might also give the writer a summary of the composition; such a summary will indicate which ideas have been communicated most effectively. Asking the writer questions is often helpful in generating new material and clarifying ideas. Students may ask the writer questions about parts that were unclear, and about interesting parts that they would like to see developed more fully. Writers may ask questions too. In this way they can check how well they are communicating, or get help with particularly troublesome passages.

Writers use the reactions they receive in these conferences to improve their work, to make it clearer and more interesting. Some students may repeat the conference-revision cycle until they are satisfied with their work, while others will move on more quickly to the next phase. However, it is always the student writers who should decide which suggestions to accept and incorporate into their writing.

The teacher is a reader and a reactor just as students are, responding, as Sommers suggests, "as any reader would, registering questions, reflecting befuddlement, and noting places where we are puzzled about the meaning" (1982, p. 155). It is here, rather than at the end of the process, that the teacher should offer suggestions for improvement, while students still have an opportunity to incorporate changes.

The activities of the revising phase are summarized in these key features:

- Students share their writing in conferences.
- Students participate constructively in discussions about classmates' writing.
- In revising, students make changes to reflect the reactions and comments of both the teacher and the classmates.
- Between the first and final drafts, students make substantive rather than only minor changes.

Editing: Putting It in Final Form

Editing should be confined to the late phases of the writing process. During this phase, students polish their writing by rearranging words and correcting spelling, punctuation, and other errors. The goal here is to make the writing "optimally readable" (Smith, 1982).

Students begin editing each composition by proofreading and marking possible errors, then seeking help from another student, and finally from the teacher. Students have more interest in this phase when they are preparing their compositions to be read by a real audience, and are more apt to reach the ultimate goal, assuming full responsibility for the correctness of their own work.

For each piece, the teacher should focus on particular categories of error, rather than insisting that students be able to identify and correct all mechanical mistakes. Each problem area can then be quickly reviewed. When mechanical correctness is crucial, the teacher can simply correct any remaining errors, or can indicate problems, perhaps using check marks in the margin, so that students can complete the correcting.

The three key features of the editing phase are:

- Students proofread their own compositions.
- Students help proofread classmates' compositions.
- Students increasingly identify their mechanical errors.

Publishing: Bringing the Composition to Life

In this final phase, students publish their compositions and share them with an appropriate audience. Publication may be oral, visual, or written. Students may read their writing to peers, or share it with larger audiences through class or school anthologies, letters, plays, or radio scripts. In each of these cases, students are communicating with a genuine audience.

Teachers can be a part of such an audience, or they can function as a private, separate audience for their students. But the teacher's role as reader should not be restricted to evaluator. Indeed, much of students' writing should never be evaluated, but should simply be shared with the teacher as "trusted adult" (Martin, D'Arcy, Newton & Parker, 1976). When evaluation is necessary, teachers might ask students to choose from their writing portfolios those pieces they wish to submit for grading.

In summary, the key features of publishing are.

- Student publish their writing in an appropriate form.
- Students share their finished writing with an appropriate audience.

These steps present a framework for taking students through the writing process. The process is merely a tool, however, and like all tools it must be adapted to the particular situation and the particular writer. Not all writing, for instance, needs to go through all the phases. Sometimes a piece should be abandoned after the drafting stage, or when students are planning to share their compositions orally, they can pay less attention to the editing phase.

But students need to be taken through the entire process again and again until it becomes second nature to them. For this tool becomes most effective when students own it, when they become so familiar with the writing process that they can manipulate it according to the differing demands of a particular writing assignment and to their unique style and habit of writing.

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Building Platforms by Extending Early Writing Stages

Terry O. Phelps
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Occasionally I work with a friend who designs and builds playground platforms. He begins by synthesizing his knowledge of children's play, experience with previous playground projects, the materials and location of the proposed structure, and his client's expectations. In the early stages of construction he may ad-lib to accommodate some feature of the landscape, but once basic platforms are in place—after much careful measuring, cutting, fitting, bolting, leveling, and sanding—they are there to stay. He may embellish the platforms with a sliding pole, tire wall, suspension bridge or such, but it is too costly to alter the basic structure.

Similarly, writing involves a synthesis of the writer's knowledge of the subject, previous writing experience, the specifics of the current task, and audience expectations. In the early stages of a paper, the student writer may extemporize, but once the "platform" draft is written, revisions are likely to be cosmetic embellishments. Look through any multiple-draft student essay and you will find the platform draft Changes between it and the final draft, no matter how many drafts come between, are probably minor. Perhaps the most crucial part of the writing process, then, is the formative preplatform stage. It is important to sustain this stage, and the most effective approach I have found involves students in extensive exploratory prewriting and freewriting steps.

I have found that many students will not put much time or effort into prewriting or freewriting assignments unless they count, so I either assign a grade or subtract points for each task. In addition to this extrinsic motivation, exploratory prewriting tasks ultimately provide intrinsic motivation because they tap students' inquisitive nature. Exploratory prewriting avoids monotony because it continually searches for more information and new ideas.

An essential requirement for assignments is that topics be within the reach and interest of students. One way to insure the latter is to let students suggest topics and have choices. No matter that their main interests are sports, cars, dating, and Michael Jackson; virtually any topic can be educational when investigated. For example, a major newspaper recently did a piece on the impact of Michael Jackson, interviewing psychologists, sociologists, entrepreneurs, and others about the reasons for Jackson's popularity, revealing much about the entertainment business, the youth culture, and changes in our culture.

Of course, such a topic may not meet the criterion of proximity. If a student's only sources of information are the printed word, the paper is likely to end up sounding like the typical dry, string-of-quotes research paper. Good topics lend themselves to direct observation, interviewing, and discussion. For a recent assignment I let students pick some institution (defined loosely as some widespread practice, belief, or problem, such as bigtime sports, marriage, retirement, etc.) and write an article about it for the magazine of their choice. The assignment required a minimum of two interviews, along with two printed sources and personal experience. Students picked topics such as stress, rock concerts, divorce, sexism, and television violence, and then they investigated causes, effects, and various associated phenomena One student interviewed several college students from broken homes, exploring the impact of divorce on the children. He also interviewed counselors, read research studies, and added his own experience.

Another assignment, the peer feature (Phelps, 1983), requires extensive interviews and observations of peers. Students not only spent hours interviewing the classmate who was the subject of the paper, but they also interviewed the subject's roommates, relatives, friends, and teachers. A similar assignment, the personal feature, enables students to select someone they find interesting and write a *People* sort of feature, again after thorough interviewing and observation. One student wrote about a Dust Bowl survivor he met at a mall. Another wrote about a crusty old chiropractor and his hocus-pocus medicine, getting a free spinal adjustment in the process. Other papers featured a Nazi concentration camp survivor, a trucker who moonlights as a deejay, and a rock musician who records his experiences in songs.

A fourth assignment which lends itself to exploratory prewriting is the restaurant feature (Phelps, et al., 1983), in which students interview customers, employees, and management to find good stories. One such feature compared the owner's relationship with his restaurant to a marriage, replete with children (employees) and anniversaries. Another revealed partner owners, one generous and one frugal, and their squabbles over everything from portions to prices. Another was written like a soap opera, depicting the tangled interactions of characters who frequented the restaurant.

All these assignments provide opportunities for exploration, and students have fun in the process, a process of firming and shaping ideas from the raw material of life. A great vehicle for forming and shaping is freewriting (Elbow, 1973), in which students collect and probe their thoughts at various stages of their exploration, writing spontaneously, nonstop, without editing. This scratch paper approach prevents early drafts from becoming platform drafts because the writer does not invest time in phrasing, structuring, correcting, and searching for *le mot juste*. In the act of freewriting, the uninhibited mind roams freely through ideas, making new associations, such as I did in making the playground analogy. A writer may venture several freewritings for a single assignment, looking for the best options instead of the first one that arises, lifting bits and pieces from one freewriting, using large chunks of another, and totally rejecting another—rejection not being so distasteful when so little is invested.

During the formative stage, prewriting interviews, observation notes, and freewriting assignments can be spaced out over several days to give ideas a chance to ferment. One three-page interview may be due on, say, September 21, with another due on September 25. This may be followed by a two-page freewriting on September 29 stemming from those interviews, with two pages of notes from observations due October 3. Another freewriting can be assigned for October 6, incorporating information gleaned from interviews, observations, and previous freewriting. Then another interview can be assigned to fill in the gaps, and another freewriting, and so on. Whether the teacher assigns a grade for each task or chooses some other form of credit, each phase must be emphasized as much as the final product.

As each phase is completed, the teacher may offer suggestions and ask questions, but these are best confined to the idea level, saving comments on mechanics and style for the platform draft. Peer critiquing can also be very beneficial as students look through each other's notes and freewritings, asking questions such as, "Did you ask . . .?" "Can you find out about . . . ?" "Could you get more information on . . . ?" The teacher's task at this stage is getting students to focus on finding an interesting point and illuminating it with specifics.

The process of forming and shaping ideas through prewriting activities and freewriting eventually brings students to the platform draft which can be critiqued for mechanics, structure, style, tone, etc. Even at this stage, the teacher may suggest that students freewrite three or four alternative introductory and concluding paragraphs to choose from. But few radical changes will be made because the evolutionary process leading to the platform draft weeds out unfit material, and it is amazing how much less revision is necessary when students really have something to say.

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Peer Editing and Instant Grading: A Practical Approach

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One of the problems with clichés is that they are generally based on truth—or at least on half-truths. The public image of the schoolteacher is one of an overburdened creature, flooded with papers, whose life centers on marking elaborate comments in red ink. All this work is wasted, the cliché continues, as the students resentfully wad up the papers and completely disregard the comments.

Unfortunately, this picture is basically true. In the 1980's, as the "Back to the Basics" movement has taken hold, teachers have experienced increased pressure to give students more writing assignments, and all too often students have failed to profit from teacher comments on written work.

Many solutions have been offered, ranging from downplaying written work to reductions in class size to allow more individualized instruction. In terms of practical relief for secondary teachers, however, the most attractive solution is peer editing combined with instant grading. This system keeps all students in a class occupied, yet allows teachers access to each student for individual writing conferences over a period of time. It also fits in with the "writing as process" concept shown by research to be the most effective method of teaching writing; as Marlene Griffith (1979) has demonstrated, teachers need to work on students' *fluency* in writing first, before proceeding to problems in form and correctness. The peer editing approach puts correction of grammatical and syntactical problems after the development of student confidence and trust in writing, and emphasizes the idea that all writing (not just "bad" writing) involves rewriting. Finally, by asking students to locate and correct writing problems, it reinforces concepts, and as Elias (1981) has shown, ultimately produces fewer errors of all kinds—usage, writing convention, and even spelling.

The system has four stages: (1) learning editing principles; (2) practicing content editing; (3) practicing grammar and usage editing; and (4) instant grading.

Stage 1: Learning Editing Principles

The first step in the process involves teaching students to become aware of how much they already know about writing, and to apply this knowledge to the work of others. This step is essential because students all too often believe two things about writing. (1) they could never find all the mistakes teachers find on their papers; and (2) the whole process is irrelevant, and beyond their comprehension.

To begin erasing these misconceptions, give the students a faulty piece of writing, xeroxed or on a transparency. Explain that it is intentionally poor, and the objective is to find the writing problems and to suggest means of correcting them. To prepare them for the editing process, have them work in pairs, working together on this assignment, something they have not written themselves, is non-threatening and builds the confidence needed for confronting their own writing later on. After adequate work time, have pairs share their observations with the class.

At first, student comments will focus on minor, familiar usage errors. As each is presented, teachers should reinforce the correction, thus showing the students they already have skills needed for editing. (If desired, this is also a good place for teachers to explain the preferred system of correctional symbols and to allow students to become familiar with it.)

As the response time continues, some few comments will begin to mention more complex errors: "These sentences are too short." "I can't tell what he's talking about here" "He's already *said* that twice." Often, even major organizational problems, such as confusing sentence order or lack of transitions, will be mentioned. At this point, teachers can take more time with these problems than was spent on usage errors, demonstrating both that these problems are crucial to improving communication, and that there are many ways to correct such problems. The last is particularly significant, as it gives students more flexibility in approaching the writing process. Finally, the initial activity harnesses the basic power the later editing will utilize: peer power. As students dissect this poor essay, they reinforce each other's ability to spot problems in communicating.

After this phase is over, teachers ask pairs of students to list two good points of the paper, and to write a sentence suggesting what writing problem the author of the paper needs to tackle first. This step reverses the students' mind-set, showing them that even markedly bad writing (inferior to theirs, as they will recognize) has some successful components, and gives them experience in seeing writing as a process, not a finished product.

Stage 2: Practicing Content Editing

As has been stated, students readily spot minor errors in spelling, etc. Why, then, should the initial peer editing experience focus on *content*? Because students tend to cling to the familiar; allowing them to edit for usage first encourages them to remain on this level, rather than rising to the more complex level of writing problems. Therefore, teachers must gear peer editing to the content level first.

This requires some preparation, however. Since the fluency stage is the vulnerable stage in the writing process, when students accept or reject the idea that writing is a process meaningful to them, care must be taken to insure that peer criticism follows guidelines and doesn't give students the idea that they cannot learn to write.

First step in preparation is taken at the time a writing assignment is made, when teachers tell students that their papers will be read by another student and, on the day of editing, allow students to select their own editing partners. The latter step may require teacher monitoring, to make sure that editing and not conversation is the product of the encounter; yet free selection of partners for the initial editing helps to reduce the threat involved in sharing their work with another person.

The steps in the editing process are these:

1. Isolate yourself and your partner, as much as possible, from the rest of the class.
2. Decide who will go first.
3. Reader shares paper orally, stopping to make comments if necessary, while responder listens.
4. At the end of the reading, responder comments on two points: (a) whether the paper fulfills the assignment or not; and (b) what the responder likes about the paper.
5. Following this, the reader reads the paper a second time. This time, the responder takes notes on words and phrases particularly liked, and ones needing improvement.

6. The responder reads the notes, amplifying comments and making specific suggestions for improvement.
7. The reader then has five minutes to make corrections and changes.
8. The two then change roles and repeat the process; papers are not submitted until the following day.

A few points need comment. Having two readings may seem artificial, but they guarantee that readers twice confront what they actually wrote. This makes it infinitely more difficult to ignore meaningless sentences or incomplete thoughts. Additionally, two readings help responders to be less emotional and to focus more specifically on both good and bad points. Also, allowing correction time and holding off submission of papers for one day lends seriousness to the writing process, and emphasizes the importance of rewriting.

During the initial editing experiences, teachers must move around the room and listen for potential problems. The most common difficulty at this point is students who are reluctant to read aloud; this must be discouraged, as silent reading puts the first confrontation of the written work on the responders, rather than on the readers.

Several class periods involving different writing assignments should be spent on this phase of the editing (accompanied perhaps by teacher reinforcement of good writing habits, in the form of posting especially good sentences taken from student work) before proceeding to the next phase.

Stage 3: Practicing Grammar and Usage Editing

Once the class seems to have mastered the basics of content editing, it's time to move into English teaching's murkiest pool: grammar, syntax, and usage. Whatever the method of teaching grammar utilized, and whatever correctional symbols employed for grammatical mistakes, this step in the editing process can effect real change in student writing habits and save teachers endless hours of repeatedly marking the same errors.

The procedure here begins with the writing assignment: After explaining it, teachers should ask students to incorporate a particular construction or grammatical concept in their papers. For example, teachers in the midst of a unit on types of sentences can ask for a complex sentence, while other teaching verbals can ask for a gerund used as direct object. Virtually any concept emphasized in a grammar lesson will work, or, for more advanced students, several such constructions.

After the assignment is written, the regular steps in editing are followed, until the moment when the responders read notes on content. After this, readers give the responders their papers for closer examination. First, responders must locate and comment on the construction asked for by the teacher; this eliminates responders from beginning by finding a number of small mechanical errors to comment on, giving readers too much to deal with at the beginning. Then, responders may continue form and usage editing, either orally and informally, or using the correctional symbols used by the teacher; in the first usage editing experiences, however, some limitation should be put on the volume of writing problems commented on, to prevent readers from being overwhelmed by keeping track of errors, or lulled to sleep by drawing attention to repeated faults. During this time, teachers should once again move about the room, settling grammatical disputes and isolating difficulties missed by the responders.

Stage 4: Instant Grading

After stages two and three have been practiced several times, it's possible to deal with the other problem mentioned at the beginning of this article: student resentment of teacher comments. Peer editing can be very successful, yet students may still turn away from the notes and corrections made by the teachers once the papers are turned in, further, students may still misinterpret their teacher's meticulously phrased comments and revise perfectly acceptable sentences while leaving poor ones alone.

The answer to both these problems lies in implementing instant grading. In this method, teachers go over papers individually with the student, commenting orally before making any marks on the paper. A study by N. D. Ziv showed that combining peer and teacher comments produces significant gains in writing ability (1982); further, Roger Garrison has shown that immediate commentary by the teacher is the only way to bring about student recognition of certain writing problems, such as poor organization (n.d.). Further, the system allows for reinforcement of *good* writing habits; the teacher's saying "I like this" is often more reinforcing than the same words written in the margin. Finally, it eliminates the majority of misinterpretations; experienced teachers can tell from students' expressions that an explanation hasn't been understood, and try it another way.

In the classroom, the process simply involves starting the work of editing, then calling individual students up for grading conferences. For a brief paragraph assignment, it might be possible to instant grade every paper in a given hour (assuming ideal class size), while in the class of a long expository essay, three or four papers could receive a thorough commentary each period. Obviously, not every student will experience instant grading every time; yet, over a period of weeks, teachers will have the opportunity to work with each one in a concentrated writing situation.

Problem Areas

The peer editing-instant grading system, like any classroom strategy, requires teacher flexibility and alertness to problems. In particular, three kinds of students can upset an editing situation. Specifically, they are:

1. **The Laggard.** Students who do not have an assignment ready to submit obviously cannot have that assignment evaluated. Here, in addition to whatever penalties the teacher imposes for lateness, the key is isolation. Students who have not done the work must be kept away from the others, both because of possible distractions and, more importantly, because editing is a positive process that helps students' grades. Therefore, students excluded from the editing experience must be made to feel they've missed an opportunity rather than avoided work.

2. **The Nitpicker.** In a system that requires some maturity, students who approach editing with the air of a top sergeant checking a barracks for one speck of dust are students who can cause real damage. When nitpickers begin to eat away at other students' confidence, they, too need isolation (or perhaps to be paired up with other nitpickers!) for the good of the group.

3. **The Vacillator.** In the editing system, rewriting time in class is limited; students who want to try every variation on a sentence are showing admirable attention to writing improvement, but this can result in only one-half of a pair having actual editing during a class hour. Teacher monitoring is once again the key, even between instant grading sessions, teachers can spot a pair in which one person is monopolizing and prolonging a step of the process.

Thus, the peer editing-instant grading system is an adaptable approach that can fit into any teacher's method of assisting students with the writing process. Ultimately, it opens up the writing experience beyond the write-grade-discard sequence. As Mina Shaughnessy stated in 1975:

> . . . teachers need assignments and ways of "correcting" papers that do not discourage students from risking exploration. And they need to make certain that in testing and evaluating, they do not mistake such risk-taking and difficulty for "failure" (p. 53).

It is this attitude, seeing writing as an ongoing process reflecting the growth and change that are part of the human experience, that produces real improvement in student writing.

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Why Can't They Just Write the Composition? Learning Styles and the Writing Process

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"How long does it have to be?"
"Does mine have to be that long if I have narrow-lined paper and write small?"
"I don't know what to write about!"
"Do I have to write on the assigned topic?"
"Since I finished early, can I do my math?"
"Can I take my paper home?"
"I didn't have enough time to finish."
"Can I go to the bathroom?"
"I just can't think this early in the morning!"

These questions and comments from students assail all teachers of composition causing them to wail, "Why can't they just write the composition?" The paranoia engendered by students' questions may, indeed, be unnecessary if teachers become aware of students' varied learning styles and design composition assignments that permit students to work within their individual learning styles.

Rita and Kenneth Dunn (1983), in their learning style research, cataloged twenty-one factors that influence the way students learn. The factors can be grouped into five categories:

1. Environmental: sound, light, temperature, design
2. Emotional: motivation, persistence, responsibility, structure
3. Sociological: peer, self, pair, team, adult, varied
4. Physical: perceptual, intake, time, mobility
5. Psychological: analytical/global, hemispheric preference, impulsive/reflective

Students' individual learning styles may be tested by using Dunn and Dunn's Learning Style Inventory (Price Systems, Box 3271, Lawrence, Kansas 66044).

Their research also discloses that students achieve optimum learning when the teaching environment addresses all the factors (Dunn, 1978). On the surface, the thought of attempting to design composition assignments considering twenty-one new ideas seems overwhelming; however, many of the factors the Dunns isolate are easily dealt with by developing students' awareness of their learning styles and permitting flexibility in assignments (Dunn, 1979).

Environmental Factors

The first area of concern is the students' environment which includes the factors of sound, light, temperature, and design. Some students request a pass to the library where it is permissible to talk because "it's too quiet in the room to write well." Other students are angered when someone sharpens a pencil because "it's too noisy to work in the room." Each person has a different noise level that is comfortable. Since many classrooms are too small to allow a talking area and a quiet area, one possible solution is the use of radio/cassette

headphone units. Students who need noise can listen while they write, but the classroom will remain quiet for those who need it. Another possible solution could be a group pass to library or student center for those who need noise, but those students need to be monitored if they are not highly self-motivated.

Some students need bright light in order to write well. Others prefer more subdued lighting. (Their parents and teachers usually tell them they will ruin their eyes writing "in the dark.") Also, some students complain it is too hot to write today, while the students across the room gripe that they are too cold. Both light and temperature affect the way students learn. The solution may be to let students choose where they sit in the classroom until they find a light and temperature combination that is right for them. An obvious requirement would be that the students cannot disrupt the class if they wish to select their own seating.

Some students learn well sitting in the prescribed student desks. Others, however, actually learn better stretched out on the floor or draped over an armchair. A carpeted area can accommodate the sprawler while a beanbag or pass to the student center may help the lounger. Even a separate chair and table can provide some relief for students who need a more casual design.

Emotional Factors

The second set of factors is emotional. The teacher notices that Johnny is self-motivated, goes to work on the assignment immediately, and continues to work diligently until finished. On the other hand, Susie has a short attention span, never understands the assignment and prefers to play "uproar" or "gossip" than write. The solution to this variance in motivation is to give Susie a shorter assignment or series of short assignments, some choice in topic of format, more teacher assistance or, possibly, peer assistance, and perhaps a multi-sensory approach. Meanwhile, Johnny can work steadily, asking for assistance when needed with only occasional checks by the teacher.

When observing students in the process of writing, teachers see that some students work diligently and continuously. Other students work until they lose interest, run into a problem, get distracted, become irritated, or lose their concentration. The quality of persistence varies with individual learning styles. Individualization of writing assignments, allowing for self-pacing, is necessary. Differences in length and type of assignment and flexibility on the length of time (due date) will allow those students who are less persistent to work in small spurts over a longer time and, thus, complete the assignment. Less persistent students may achieve better on assignments with short, segmented, related writings than on a long paper. These writings may be presented as a contract activity packet with self-checking progress sheets.

The ideal students for many teachers are the responsible ones who work independently to complete assignments with a minimum of supervision. "Ah, if only *all* my students were like George and Mary!" is wishful thinking, for many students need clarification of instructions, help finding a subject, suggestions for organization, reclarification of directions, and on and on. Students with a low level of responsibility are often frustrating to teachers and frequently become discouraged because their best efforts are not successful. Such students need detailed and clearly-stated instructions, lists of resources (including people) for help, a time line for completion of the assignment, a system for self-checking of progress, and alternate assignments (choice of essay, poem, cartoon strip, etc.). Less persistent students may also benefit from closer monitoring by the teacher or a peer.

W' n a composition teacher gives a highly structured writing assignmei. (i.e , specific length, specific topic, specific format), half the students complain that the assignment is too limited to write about well. Then when the same teacher gives an open assignment (no specific requirements), the other half of the students cry, "What will I write about?" This dilemma of structure can drive composition teachers crazy. In this area, variety and choices lead to sanity When specific format or length is necessary, choice of topic will help the students who like less structure. When open assignments are given, suggested topics, length, etc. can be given individually to those students who need more structure.

Sociological Factors

The teacher who gives a writing assignment to be done individually will be blasted by a chorus of "Why can't we work togther?" The teacher who gives a writing assignment for pairs will be asked, "Why can't we three (or four or five) work together?" The teacher who assigns a small group writing (three to five in each group) will hear, "But I can't work in groups; can't I work alone?" The answer to all these questions needs to be "yes" if the sociological elements of learning style prevail Some students work better alone, in a pair, or in a group. Some students work better self-motivated; some, teacher-motivated; some, other adult-motivated, some, peer-motivated. Allowing students to select the way they write the assignment will provide more success. The peer-editing process described in this book is an excellent strategy for using a group approach to revising and editing. Group prewriting exercises also help some students In addition, those students who say. "Will you read this and tell me how to change it?" need adult input and should get it. Others ("I'd rather do it myself!") need no teacher "interference" and will write better without much teacher supervision. Again, the emphasis is on student choices.

Physical Factors

Besides consideration of sociological factors, consideration must be given to physical elements as well. Special education teachers have enlightened regular classroom teachers regarding the various perceptual learners: auditory, visual, tactual, and kinesthetic. This information should affect writing assignments. A multisensory approach to prewriting experiences is essential. Writing from records, pictures, "feely" items in a paper bag, or a session out under a tree will meet the needs of each type of learner. Also, presenting instructions in a multisensory manner (written and spoken) will benefit students.

One of the most interesting elements the Dunns isolated was intake. Some students write more easily when they are consuming, (nibbling, drinking, smoking, chewing). While school rules may limit the possibilities for intake in the classroom, options may include chewing gum or drinking water. The Dunns suggest experimenting with carrot sticks or green pepper slices to determine which students truly need intake. Another clue to the students who require intake is nibbling on pencil, pen, or fingernails.

How often teachers in the lounge moan, "How can I teach Remedial English at 8 a.m ? I'm a night owl. I'm not even awake until 10!" Students also suffer this problem of being a morning lark, an afternoon go-getter, or a night owl. Flexibility in due dates can help solve the time problem Allowing the night owls to read their book-report books in class and write their papers at home at night will allow higher achievement. Counseling students on scheduling a difficult class during the "best" part of their school day may be even more effective.

The most irritating student to many teachers is "Harry" who does not, cannot, and will not the teacher often believes, stay in his seat and write. Harry sharpens an already-sharp pencil, writes a sentence, goes over to the bulletin board, writes a sentence, asks for a pass to the restroom, writes a sentence, gets a dictionary . . . and continues until the teacher informs him that if he gets up one more time, he will be sent to the office. Harry has a great need for

mobility. This need is often shared by even professional writers Instead of increased regimentation, Harry needs permission to move around and vary his posture. His needs must, however, be balanced against the needs of those students who can only write in a quiet classroom with few distractions A possible solution would be to seat Harry on the outside row, placing a pencil sharpener, dictionaries, and other resources in an open area beside him. Harry could then move quietly when he needs to. More versatile seats such as chairs and tables (not connected student desks) could keep the Harrys from fidgeting in their seats

Psychological Factors

Teachers who present the research paper in neat, small-step, orderly segments encounter many students who stare blank-eyed and complain that the paper makes "no sense "Teachers who present the entire concept of the three-point theme encounter many students who stare blank-eyed and complain that the paper makes "no sense." Neither group of students is "blowing off the assignment", they are simply processing the information in different ways

Analytic students use inductive reasoning and understand the whole by examining its parts. Global students, on the other hand, respond to the concept as a whole and have trouble differentiating the parts. They cope best with deductive reasoning (Thornell, 1977). The analytic students learn better at serial learning and problem solving, while the global students learn better by discovery methods (Grieve & Davis, 1977) and need more structure and guidance. Therefore, composition assignments need to be presented in two ways. For example, the three-point theme can be presented as a whole for the global student and then approached in segments (introduction, body, conclusion) for the analytic student. The same approaches could be used in research papers or paragraph writing.

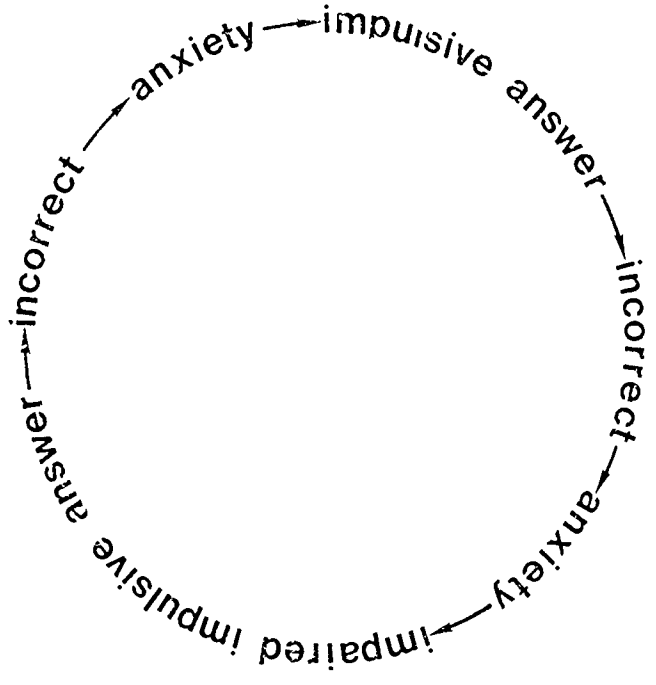
When the teacher assigns a creative assignment, many students complain that the assignment is "silly." When the teacher assigns an expository essay, other students complain that the assignment is "dull" and requires no "creativity." Hemispheric preference (right or left brain) also affects the processing of information The right-brained students think in pictures and reason deductively while the left-brained students think in words and reason inductively. The right-brained are not bothered by sound, prefer dim illumination, and informal design. They are usually not motivated or persistent and prefer to work with peers using tactile stimuli (Dunn, Cavanaugh, Eberle, Zenhausern, 1982). They like music, intake, and mobility. In contrast, the left-brained like bright light, a formal desk, a quiet room, and no intake They are persistent and responsible, but want teacher input (Dunn, Price, Bacilious, Zenhausern, 1982).

Writing assignments for left-brained students should include long-term goals and provide independent study with lists of resources and places to secure help when needed. Writing assignments for right-brained may start with drawing pictures and then "translating" the pictures into short, varied works. The students need immediate feedback and encouragement and initial success. These students need teacher supervision during the writing process.

The bane of every composition teacher is the fact that some students finish very rapidly, and others never get finished in the time allotted. Most tricks the teacher has tried to solve this problem have failed. This pace problem is the result of a class filled with both reflective and impulsive students.

The reflective students have a tendency to "reflect" over alternative solutions and weigh their decisions carefully; thus, their response time is slower, but the number of errors is small. Conversely, the impulsive students act first and then discover that they are not correct, creating more errors but a shorter response time. The reflective students have the capacity for sustained concentration and give clear, descriptive answers while the impulsive students give vague, amorphous responses (Kagan, Rosman, Day, Albert & Phillips, 1964) The

impulsive students are more restless and distractible, but the reflective students are not able to work rapidly in a task like brainstorming. Prewriting activities may both loosen up the reflective students so they can work more rapidly and help them develop fluency and not be so evaluative as they write. The same exercises may help focus the impulsive students and encourage them to think through a subject before beginning to write. A very real danger for the impulsive students is the "maladaptive cycle" of:



This cycle may result in apathy or hostility toward learning experiences (Kagan, et al., 1964). Structural journal writing with immediate feedback such as the short directed writings described in this book could short-circuit this deadly cycle. Brainstorming and other fast-paced activities may build self-confidence in the impulsive students.

The keystone to adapting composition assignments is to accommodate the varying learning styles is student choices. Students need to be allowed to choose topic, format (when possible), time, place, and environment for writing. These student choices must be enlightened and based on the students' knowledge of their own learning styles. How can the necessity for student choices be combined with scope and sequence objectives and those writing skills all students must learn? Compatibility is achieved through flexibility and variety. A mixture of structured and open assignments with flexibility of when and where the work is done, with teacher attention and peer input can accomplish many of the goals of individualization, and accommodate different learning styles. Many teachers have begun this individualization based on their own experiences. The two most important ingredients for achieving optimum learning are the teacher's awareness that students learn in different ways and their earnest attempt to provide opportunities for all learners to write in the most comfortable and successful style.

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Sample Assignment

Allows planning, thinking outside class	On Wednesday and Thursday of next week, we will work on a 3-point theme based on the play *Our Town*.
Allows topic choice and ideas at varied levels of complexity	**Possible Topics** 1. Life is precious beyond all measure. 2. Compare/contrast play and movie versions 3. Influence of author's background and purpose of the play. 4. Compare/contrast with *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. 5. Topic of your choice (discuss with me).
Allows choice of activities and sociological alternatives Allows time of day preference Allows choice of environment Allows mobility with minimal disturbance	**Work Schedule** 1. Wednesday: prewriting and preplanning (possibilities: outline, notes, research in library, discussion or brainstorming in pairs or groups, discussion with teacher, etc.). Think about how you want to spend the time *profitably*. 2. Thursday: work on rough draft (individually or in pairs in library or student center). Remember that your paper must be uniquely yours even though you work with a friend. 3. Note: If you prefer to work at home, plan to work on your grammar packet or read your book report in class. (You *must* work on English.) 4. If you wish a pass to the library or student center, see me to schedule it. 5. Classroom will be *quiet* work area. Walkman will be allowed as long as it can't be heard by others. Gum or glass of water will be ok. (No candy or colas as per school rules.) 6. If you need to move around, sit at designated tables.
Allows necessary structure	**Requirements** 1. Minimum 5 paragraphs; no maximum. 2. Formal writing rules apply 3. Format of 3-point theme. 4. Best style, etc.
Allows independent work or assistance as needed	**Resources** 1. Bring thesaurus, Strunk and White, grammar and composition text. 2. Resources in room. quotation books, dictionaries, grammar and mechanics flipcharts. 3. Teacher and librarian available. 4. Bring 3-point theme work sheet we have used before.
Allows time flexibility Allows both teacher and peer input	**Due Date** Rough draft due following Monday (may be turned in early). A week from Monday, we will do peer editing in class in groups If you want me to look over rough draft, note that on the top of page.

Freewriting

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Freewriting is a writing strategy with a simple starting rule. Write for a specified amount of time without stopping and without editing. Described by Peter Elbow in two books—*Writing without Teachers* (1973) and *Writing with Power* (1981)—freewriting provides writers the freedom to write without concern whether the writing is "good" or "correct." It places emphasis on the *process* of writing rather than a finished product. In Elbow's words, "control, coherence, and knowing your mind are not what you start out with but what you wind up with" (1981, p. 15).

Far from being a trendy technique, freewriting fits squarely in the classical tradition of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* which outlined a composing process of (1) invention, (2) arrangement, and (3) style. Freewriting, a tool for helping writers discover what they have to say on a subject, is part of the invention or idea-getting stage of composing.

Experienced writers often find that freewriting produces some of their best and most imaginative work. Less-experienced writers, especially those with basic problems, may profit even more since they are freed of crippling concerns about correct spelling and usage and are encouraged simply to get their ideas onto the page in any form possible.

Critics of freewriting suggest that the strategy devalues grammatical concerns. After all, Elbow has written that "grammar is glamour." However, he has also written that much of what is produced in freewriting is "garbage," and that the only way to "make grammar disappear—to keep the surface of your writing from distracting readers away from your message—is to make it right" (1981, p. 168). Elbow's second rule for freewriting is that, after the freewriting, editing must be "cutthroat." Ultimately, Elbow's freewriting strategies are grounded in realism, taking into account the tough demands of writing well and the mixed range of skills that student writers bring to composing. There must be something on the page before we can be concerned about correctness, and the freewriting strategy allows all writers to put their ideas (however misspelled) on the line. Once on the line, they may be edited toward correctness.

What follows is a concise description of how to employ freewriting in classes. With some vocabulary and assignment topic modification, this approach to freewriting has been used successfully from elementary through college levels.

1 **Finding writing topics.** Ask students to produce a list of five or ten specific topics from a general subject which you suggest. Possibilities are: people, places, animals, memorable moments or any other subject suitable for your class and purposes. (Caution. "my dog Fritz" is more likely to produce lively writing than "dogs.") Producing a second list on another subject increases the chance of more students finding topics which interest them. Finally, suggest that some might like to try a "radical freewrite," not beginning with any topic in mind at all and simply writing whatever comes to mind. The goal is to insure that all students have something to write about.

2. **Freewriting instructions.** Ask students to select the one topic from their list that they are most interested in. Give freewriting directions: "When I tell you to write, I want you to write on your topic for ten minutes (at first, and for younger writers, five minutes might be better) without stopping. Do not be concerned about grammar, spelling, or mechanics. I want you to think only about your topic and what you can write about it. Write as fast as you can. If you run out of ideas, keep you pen moving even if you must repeat your last sentence until something else comes to mind. Something will. If you find yourself getting off the subject, don't worry. Just try to see if you can write yourself back into the subject. Are there any questions? Go."

3. **Group activity.** Although freewriting is valuable in itself for fluency practice and self-expression, most teachers will want to use it also as a starting point for more structured writings. Elbow's second rule applies here: Writers must learn to edit, to recognize strengths, weaknesses and mechanical errors. Reading student writing in small groups teaches editing skills and provides a wider audience response than producing writing just to be read by the teacher alone. While group formation and management may be complex, the results are well worth the effort. Groups of three are efficient: one reader, two listeners, and all can read in a short time. Teachers should intervene to keep any student from feeling "left out" and to keep private clubs from forming which can lead to group discipline problems. If the seats are movable, ask the students to turn toward each other so the groups are distinct.

4. **Sharing in small groups.** After forming groups of three, advise the students that they will each read their freewrites to the other group members. After each reading, the other two group members will respond *to the subject* of the freewriting but will not criticize it. This non-judgmental response helps to develop trust, sharpens listening skills and gives the reader some other experiences and ideas on the writing topic.

5. **Reader or listener response in small groups.** After sharing, ask the groups to repeat the process, but this time the listeners take notes of any word, phrase, sentence, idea, pattern—any feature of the writing itself—which impressed them. They should make no negative comments. Elbow calls this activity "pointing." In any writing, some parts will be better than some other parts. Hearing what words impress listeners or readers helps the writer learn how words affect people. "Telling" is another possible activity in which readers or listeners narrate what they thought as they read or heard the freewrite. Initially, Elbow recommends reading aloud by the writer, later papers may be exchanged and read silently.

6. **Shaping.** For teachers who want freewriting to be more than a fluency exercise or a journal activity, the small group activity provides writers with information useful for revising the freewrite toward a more formal stage. Immediately after the group activity is a good time to request another freewrite, but first ask the writers to write in one sentence what the main idea of the freewrite is. This sentence will be the starting point of another freewrite, and for some writers it may be close to a usable thesis statement. After this freewrite, group activity can now move to more formal criticism. The group audience can offer suggestions about what ideas in the writing might make good paragraph topics, what parts are good supporting detail and so on. These skills may be taught by asking the class as a whole to read a freewrite (use photocopies, transparencies, or chalkboard) and offer suggestions about thesis and possible paragraph structure. Vary the criteria to suit the kind of writing you want produced and to emphasize the writing structures you wish to teach. During or after this group work, writers might be asked to produce a simple outline. A "shaped" or rough draft is the next step, followed by more group reading to evaluate the organization and development.

7. **Completing.** This is the last stage before sending the writing "out into the cold, cruel world." This final editing eliminates all usage, grammar, and mechanical errors which could distract readers from the message in the writing. Remember Elbow's advice: Make the question of grammar "disappear" by getting the grammar right. Once again, small groups may be used to help writers find errors they have missed. Suggestion. Ask student editors to mark possible problems but to leave all revisions to the writer.

   The freewriting process does emphasize grammatical correctness, but in a way that encourages writers to explore their thoughts, freeing them to use *all* the words they know, not just the ones they think they can spell. Concern for correctness is crucial in the final product, but not in the earlier stages of composing where fear of making errors can interfere with getting ideas on the page. In freewriting, concern for grammar occurs at the ideal place in the composing process to encourage writers to get their best thoughts on the page, to gain some critical perspective on them and to improve them until they are both interesting to read and correct in form.

Samples of Student Freewriting

A "radical" freewrite:

Freewriting is not my kind of entertainment. But what the heck. Ten minutes & it's over. What can I say? I have no subject to write about. Counting my freckles is more fun than this, except I lose count after awhile. Reminds me of old wives' tales—as many freckles as you have is as many friends as you have. I must have the entire earth's population as a friend; that includes all the animals. They always seem to make room for more. Enough of the freckles. What else can I prattle on about. My English grade. Let's forget that; I don't like comedies. We could discuss the cat that is practically sitting on top of this paper. I've heard of curiosity, but this is ridiculous. There's nothing quite like having cat fur in your hair and all over your clothes. Makes you appreciate snakes. Too bad this is my only thrill in life. Imagine looking foward to writing 10 minutes every week. It kind of sets you on the edge of your chair, doesn't it?

A ten-minute freewrite on a topic:

I was sitting in my room at my mom and dad's thinking about how cold it is outside, but still wanting to be out there. Our yard is white cause it sleeted late last night. I seen the dogs running out in the ice and sliding around and the horses are walking real slow and they all look funny. I want to go out in it but its so cold I just can't make myself put my clothes on and get out in it. I'm listening to the radio, or well it's playing and has been for about 3 hours, and I haven't really been listening to it but I don't like sitting in a quiet room. Then someone on the radio will say something about tomorrow and I think I want be able to sit here any longer but I do. Not very many birds are flying around out there and that's unusual cause there is usually a bunch of birds sitting on the wires, but there not there now. The highway is just a little ways away and the cars are moving real slow. The big trucks are going extra slow too. Usually they go flying by, but today there real slow, gearing down before they go up the hill. To me today everything is in slow motion. The cars and trucks the birds, the dogs, horses, even the pigs aren't moving like they usually do. I'm in slow motion too. Or I feel like I'm in slow motion I guess cold weather affects everybody in some way.

A "shaped" freewrite:

I really hate having to feed the mule and the horse when its cold. I quickly fill a bucket with sweet feed from a barrel while watching for a mouse. There are always mice in the shed because of the feed. Then I grab two blocks of hay under one arm and head for the lot. By this time Dan and Susie, the mule and the horse, have heard me getting the feed and are standing with their heads over the gate. I have to tip toe to pour the feed in trof and step back to throw the hay over the fence. If there is any wind blowing about half the hay comes back all over me.

Naturally while I'm doing this I'm crabbing because my husband isn't home to **his job**. He drives a truck and is only home on weekends. He feeds on Saturday and Sunday and I feel like I'm getting a vacation from it. It seems like I always run out of feed when hes gone. That is always a job and a half. I only buy 100 pounds at a time, which is two sacks. Thats all I can pour up before my arms break.

My husband told me to get a salt block but didn't bother to say how heavy it was. Well, when I got home with it, it was all I could do to lift it out of the trunk of my car. I rolled it and carried it until I finally made it to the lot. I was to exhausted to pick it up and put it in the feed trof, so I pushed it through the gate and forgot about it. Needless to say my husband heard about the salt block when he got home and if he ever wants another one he knows what to do about it.

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Journals Develop a Voice

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Britton (1970), Moffett (1968), and other authorities all tell us that before writing for other people, we need first to explore ourselves, responding in a personal vein before we begin moving outside to become objective. Writing which is grounded in this personal reaction sounds genuine, not like the tissues of abstraction which distinguish so many government documents and committee reports, dissertations, and research essays. And since, to get the world's work done efficiently, it's best if we can speak as one human being to another, not as disembodied machines, anything we can do to help our students learn this honest and powerful writing is going to make them better workers, as well as more sensitive human beings.

Good journals have this quality of real people talking. And just as one human being's spoken voice is distinguishable from another's, so their written voices, if we do not muzzle them, will also emerge as unique. It is this quality of individuality that makes journals a pleasure to read. It's not a quality, however, which comes easily to all students. Some have been so indoctrinated to writing bland, spiritless prose which avoids any risk or commitment that they find it hard to relax and sound natural. One way to overcome this problem is to read to the class often from the journals, praising the quality of genuineness whenever it appears. I begin almost every class by reading a section from at least two, sometimes as many as ten, journals. Hearing these and seeing the wide latitude of response that's welcome, students change their journals and begin to respond naturally. As they grow accustomed to the sound of a real voice, students will feel free to develop their own.

An easy way to start this development is by asking students to write about events in their own lives. They can then move away from the entirely personal by putting things they are reading into the context of their lives. These more course-centered journals can then prove valuable in any discipline, since this relating of new information to old knowledge is necessary for all true learning.

Voice Emerges from Relating Personal Events

While still young, children easily find their own voices, before they've learned a mechanical way of responding. When Lenora Strus in Duncan asked her fourth-grade students to write two journals, "What I'm Thankful For" and "What Thanksgiving Means to Me," most produced some kind of list and described a well-stocked table. Even so, the journals were all different. Practical-minded Tommy sticks here with the basics—prodigious amounts of food and readily available health care, but also, for a moment, he experiences the world of an earlier generation.

> I'm thankfull for what I have. When my annsisters was in the war they probably didn't have a chance to be together. I am thankfull that I was not a pilgrim they didn't have any grub to eat so they probably didn't have a chance. I am thankfull to be able to have a bunch of food. I am also thankfull that we don't have any wars and we can go buy medicine and bandages.

Renee starts the usual ritual list of things to be thankful for, but toward the end she must gamely subdue her less grateful thought to the pattern.

> I am thankful for my perants. If it were not for my perents I would not be here. I am thankful for my grandperents. If it were not for my grandpernants my mother would not be here, and I would not be here. I am thankful for God. If it was not for God nobody would be here. I am thankful for my brothers. If it were not for my brothers I would not have nobody to play with or fight with. I am thankful for my sister if it were not for my sister I wuld not have to clean up her messes.

Having wrestled in this entry with the demon of parallel structure, she conquers it in her next entry on "What Thanksgiving Means to Me," and turns a fine rhetorical device to what is obviously her forte—comedy.

> Pilgrims
> had
> lots
> of
> turkey,
> bread
> and
> chiken.
> For dersert
> they had
> cherrys.
> When
> they
> were
> through
> they
> had
> a
> messy Kichen!

Sometimes by the time students reach high school, they're too inhibited for such spontaneity, and need to be opened up first with brainstorming or by being asked to respond to some simple concrete object. When Marcia Key of Purcell High School used nuts of various kinds to prompt her students' writing, they produced journals as different as the following two The first was obviously prompted by good old American materialism, but it also breathes a warm nostalgia about activities traditional in this family.

> As the fall approaches we gather our gunny sacks and pails and head to the pecan trees and make some extra money. We try to avoid the ones with worm holes, and pick the pretty brown and black stripey ones. Some days Grandmother makes pecan pies to eat. Grandad takes out the de-sheller and trys them out when we first start picking. Dad takes the tractor and puts me way up in the trees with the bucket, and I take a frailing pole and beat the lims to force the peacans out. After Terry and I get a sackful we sell them and blow the money within the day.

The second student's journal entry is a wonderful blend of cocky self-assurance and the firm affection a young man feels for his grandfather.

> My grandpa thinks he is the best peanut brittle maker in the world. He has a system that is unbelievable and what he calls fool-proof. Whenever grandpa sets into the task of preparing peanut brittle everybody in the house knows to be quiet. My grandpas system is as follows: he heats all the ingredients and he knows when to take the mixture off the stove, pour it out and let it cool when he hears three pops. He could sit there stirring it until the mixture was gone and if he didn't hear the third pop he would keep on stirring. Every time he makes it, it is burnt because he waits until the third pop instead of the second. When he does hear the third pop, you'd think his pants were on fire. He starts yelling "There it is, there it is!" and rushes around like a maniac. My solution to the burnt peanut brittle is quite simple. I stand around the corner and when he yells, "Second pop," I pop my gum, and sure enough, there he goes runn.ng and yelling. But it is the best peanut brittle I've ever tasted, on the second pop.

Another way of helping students reach these personal experiences is through the kind of assignment Mark Hanson suggests in his book, *Sources* (1978), a book of journal suggestions based on the work of psychologist Ira Progoff. In my college composition classes, students listed—or made what Hanson calls "Markings"—"Things I've Said Goodbye To," and then chose one item of the list to write about. As always, each produced a journal entry with a totally different tone. Ted Phillips began a purely humorous account of truck ownership, but stronger feelings overwhelmed him.

> In high school, I owned this unbelievably loud 1979 Ford pickup It had to be one of the most beat up, sorry performing, and ugliest cars I have ever seen. I did everything in that truck. Three years of high school were spent riding to school, on snowy paper routes, out on dates, and generally all over Seminole County in that beast. The funny thing is that all my friends had newer and better cars than I did, but mine never broke down. It always started when I asked it to, and it never really fouled up when I was being chased by police or mean 6'5" cowboys. It lost its tailgate, rear left brake light, most of its paint, bits and pieces of the motor and other assorted doo-dads over the three years of bounding through the rut infested streets and pastures of Seminole. Finally, however, I graduated not only from high school, but also the truck. What a sad occasion. My friends and I held a funeral at the lake. We filled the bed of the truck with ice and kegs and beer and had a nice, though foggy funeral. The next day, my dad bought me a new Mercury Cougar It runs smoother, quieter, and drives much easier, but it doesn't have the feelings that a pickup gives.

Though it enjoys some of the same mood, Joy Freeman's piece is more serious as she explores her memories of a farm, her delight at being Daddy's little girl, and finally the high price paid for being female.

> Going to the farm with Daddy is something I've said goodbye to, and it's something I'll always miss. I went with him every day after school and on Saturdays I'd stay all day. We'd load up in whatever ol' pickup he was driving at the time, and put Snoopy in the back. I usually got back there with him cause I loved riding with the wind blowing hard on my face. . . . Daddy would give me a piggy-back ride and I'd put my feet in his back pockets. . . .
>
> We used to have to go out to the farm and chop cotton, too. That's no fun, either. It would be really hot and we'd be out there swinging at those ol' yucky careless weeds or else Johnson grass. I liked going to the farm with Daddy. I always wished I were a boy cause they I could've kept on going with him. . . .

The same power of the individual voice shows up in one of Karen Ryan's fif ' graders from Duncan, Oklahoma This piece, prompted by a set of markings on places important in the student's life, supplies a wealth of detail that teachers find all too rarely in a ten-year-old's work.

> Every holiday we go there. My grandpa and grandma are cotton bailers and a lot of other things.
>
> The best time I had was their 50 ann. All the family was there. We had a big cake. All the girls and women wore yellow dress. All the men and boys wore suites with ties. We all had flowers. Grandma and Grandpa had big flowers.
>
> Grandma and Grandpa got a lot of gifts. I got to help open them. They got a lot of flowers too. One great aunt sent flowers all the way from Florida.
>
> Another time I had fun was when they were laying carpet. I got to cook 21 meals and I didn't get burned or the food I had fun.
>
> One time me and my boy cousin got to kill Grandma with the water hose. We even got to wash our hair out in the yard.
>
> In the winter I get to ride in the trucks with them. Sometimes I even get to drive them.
>
> They have a farm with a pond, cows and horses. Even a mountain. The Melton Mountain. One time Grandma was rideing Prince when the saddle fell off. She wasn't hurt.
>
> Every Christmas we all get together and share gifts. Grandma playes the paino and we all sing. Then we go slay rideing.
>
> I would be very sad if Grandma or Grandpa died. But it will happen someday.

Course-Centered Journals: Responses to Reading

The journal assignments most useful in disciplines other than writing are responses to reading or other course work, such as those we saw earlier about Thanksgiving. Here, as well as in writing directly of their personal lives, students respond in unique ways, so that their journals are all different After a reading assignment, such journals are enjoyable for the teacher, a means of better understanding the class, rather than a dreaded chore like grading multiple-choice or essay exams. These personalized responses also mean a more long-lasting understanding of the subject, and produce specific skills we need to encourage. When Lorene Suttle of Duncan asked her third grade to write their opinion of "Pinocchio," one student wrote a fine summary:

> He ran throw the forest, and jumped over a pond. When the cat and the wolf went to jump over the pond, they fell into there bags. And splash they fell. Then Pinnochio saw a cabin. A fairy told Pinocchio to be good els youll be a donkey. Then Pinocchio said all I wanted was to be a little boy.

Another student penetrated straight to the moral:

> I like the story of Pinnocchio. Because it shose what you should do and what you shouldn't do. Lke you shouldn't lie. And you shouldn't run away.

A third journal entry concentrated on the symbols through which psychoanalysts like Bruno Bettleheim (1977) believe fairy tales speak to children and help them cope with the problems of growing up and the changes in their bodies that must be lived out:

> I like it because he got his feet bernt and he hide to the fiari to. But his nose grew and grew. But then the fiare chang his nose back to normol size.

Students who are less able academically may especially benefit from journals. When Janet Hover of Lawton High School asked her remedial reading class to respond to a story, each did so on a different level. Sheri, for instance summarized it:

> This story tells about a man and his son who come across a she bull snake and since the man doesn't like snakes he has his dog kill it. They found out the reason why she didn't fight back was because she was too weak to fight because she was going to have babies. They the next day came across her mate and the man felt so sorry for it that he couldn't kill it so that is why his son threw it over the bank and the reason they call this story "Lover," is because the snakes are lovers.

Another student thought back to a personal experience.

> I felt like I was back on the farm I could remember me and my brother killing a female snake with some sticks and we felt like the boy when we found out she was going to have babys also.

Tracy drew the analogy of a marriage:

> The bull snake was hurt. The father relized that animals of all kinds can love just as well as people can. The bull snake just layed there by the dead snake (his mate) not moving that much. I think it was cruel to kill a snake for just one reason like not liking them. I think love was a good name for the story. For it showed that animals of all kinds do love each other like husband and wife.

When they wrote about a portion of Charles Darwin's autobiography, Sandra Effinger's Millwood High School class also reacted in different ways, revealing cognitive levels beginning with Elicia Brannon's simple recall of an incident:

> Charles Darwin was never a perfect kid but he was exciting. I think the mostexciting thing that happened to him was when he was collecting beetles. He saw a third and a new kind and as he held two in his hands, he started thinking of how he was going to get the other one. He then put one in his mouth, which made me sick, and while trying to catch the other, the one in his mouth ejected some kind of fluid which burnt his tongue. He spit it out and lost both.

Dara Richardson generalized from such behavior as Elicia described, understanding for the first time that famous scientists are also ordinary people, not some master race alien from the rest of us.

> When I think about a famous scientist or inventor, I just completely forget that they are humans also. I previously thought that Charles Darwin had no real childhood as described in his Autobiography. I was under the impression that he began his studies as a child. He doesn't seem like the ordinary person. I now realize that Charles Darwin is an ordinary human being in most aspects. He collected bugs, was mischievous and didn't take much interest in education just like most boys of our time.

Myra Todd was concerned with Darwin as a writer, and compared his writing process to what had been suggested in her class.

> One thing that made this autobiography understandable was Darwin always gave clear proof of his adventures. I noticed where Darwin has the same idea as you have as far as writing is concerned. He says he writes better when he scribbles his thoughts first and then corrects them.

Developing Journals through Praise and Reading Aloud

In journals like those above, students are not only putting the material into terms they can understand, they are also developing a feeling for their own voice, hearing how it sounds when written out. Teachers need to pick out the places which do this most successfully and encourage students to produce more writing of this kind. They also need to point out the specific ways in which the writing achieves this individuality, this power. They might discuss, on a level appropriate to the students' age, such rhetorical devices as the parallelism of the Thanksgiving entry or the personification of the 1979 Ford pickup. Certainly they can show how all writing is enlivened and made more convincing through specific detail: the young girl's feet in her father's pockets, for example, or "killing" Grandma with the water hose. When Patti Blevins asked her students at Pratt Elementary School in Sand Springs to keep a journal for several weeks, many students dutifully handed in a routine litany of their activities The students were writing a lot, but not saying much of interest to either themselves or their teacher. But one day Amy, excited by helping a friend master a difficult gymnastic feat, captured her breathless satisfaction:

> Today my friend just got through learning to do a pennydrop. And when she gets through her face is so red it looks like an apple. So I told her to say I can do it. And when she got up that last time her face wasn't red. So I tot her how to swing more.

If the teacher reads this to the class, praising the vivid detail, the dialogue, the simile, and suggesting more lengthy development of an event, other writers in the class might match Amy's achievement, and Amy might even improve on it.

Jim Gibson in one of my classes had fun taking a metaphor literally:

> In the first two chapters of Lanham (1979), he shows how you can tear up sentences and put them back together in a simpler form. I liked the name of the method he used, "The Paramedic Method," because it made me visualize this sentence that is all messed up in a wrecked paragraph and these little men coming in to quickly put the sentence back together and then sending it off to the sentence hospital for polishing and recuperation.

Jim's delight in language needs to be shared with the class, not only to develop their awareness of metaphors, but also to stimulate their own playfulness.

Even journal entries that are not entirely successful often contain valuable hints about good writing Barry, in Dorris Crawford's Sand Springs High School class, is probably not comfortable with writing. But here, as he soberly and meticulously describes, "Something I Never Finished," an assignment from Hanson's book, he describes what interests him, and in the process reveals a remarkable vocabulary, whose richness and detail should be pointed out to his classmates.

> I never finished the clock because I had some of the transistors and resistors that went into it but I didn't have a transformer or any capacitors switches, diodes, electrolytic capacitors, or any light-emitting diodes or triodes or silicon controlled rectifiers. So when I got to the places where I needed those parts I had to stop building it. I have been buying some parts such as capacitors and cadmium sulfide cells, but I still need many more parts. But when I get them I will finish it.

Praised for how much he knows, Barry may then start to feel better about his writing, and himself, and his classmates may learn the strength of specific diction

Sometimes it's the possibility of an unexpected form or genre that needs to be noticed, or the yeasty effect of a sense of humor. Steve Dawson, in my college expository writing class, enjoyed writing light verse, and responded to a description of fast-food restaurants with this.

Fresh frozen beef
Thawed then beaten
Stuck under lamps
Soon to be eaten

Greasy french fries
Nice n' hot
Stuck in bags
That soon blot

Grease relief
Many call it
Prices soar
Depletes the wallet

Funny suits
Inside are found
With bold colors
Resembling clowns

I see one
That hill on top
Quick to criticize
Quicker to stop

When this journal was read to the class early in the semester, Steve's wit was rewarded with laughter, and, at the same time, his classmates realized how flexible a "journal entry" could be.

Journals such as those above are typical of what James Britton calls expressive writing. But "expressive" does not have to mean the only audience is the writer; expressive writing is also for any audience to whom the writer, not just his or her ideas, is important. Thus to be expressive, journals do not have to be addressed only to the self, as some teachers seem to feel. Nor does the teacher have to be the only audience. Most writers thrive with a group to read their work and to whose writing they can listen. In such a situation, journals build on other journals, not just in content but also in writing skills and sensitivity.

No one familiar with it could mistake the writing of Steve, who wrote the fast-food poem, for that of anyone else. And through hearing his work, and that of others that semester, his classmates could learn that it is not only safe, but also desirable, to explore new ways of expressing themselves, coming more and more to write about the materials of the course as one human being to another, each in the voice of a unique personality.

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Short Directed Writings: Another Approach to Journals

Annette Brown
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At lunch I usually have an inspiring or hysterically funny tale to tell my colleagues about something one of my students has written and shared with the rest of us in class. (Art Linkletter was right.) After I tell my story and the "oo's" and "ah's" or laughter dies down, someone will inevitably ask about the cause of this writing escapade. Immediately I seize the opportunity to tout the short directed writing and sharing process that happens EVERY day in my classroom. While I call these writings the "journal," I add a directed or focused dimension. Because the writing is directed, the teacher can control the topic and reinforce the steps in the writing process.

The key to making the short directed writing work is a list of topics for the writings. To gain fluency in writing, students practice making lists, brainstorming, and five senses exercises. Concrete five senses activities begin with the teacher giving students something to study with the five senses, for example, a chocolate kiss and directing them to write what the object looks like, smells like, feels like, sounds like, and tastes like. Putting taste last is essential if the object is edible! From this list students can construct a poem or write a comparison/contrast paragraph. Eventually these concrete activities give way to abstract ones in which students are asked to reflect or imagine and write their sense impressions without actually having the object before them. Some possible topics for this activity include salt, a spider, a rubber band, a pickle, the hospital, and ink.

Students can also make lists of favorite actors, actresses, movies, TV shows, and songs, and these lists can be used for outlines and other extended writing assignments. These extended directed writings may take several days while we review outlining and paragraph development in class. In the examples below, Jane first made a list of her favorite TV shows. Next she divided the items on her list into two categories, comedy and drama. The second listing is the beginning of an outline which is formalized as the day's lesson on outlining is completed. The next day's directed writing is a list of favorite movies. From there we move to lists of favorite actors and actresses who are then ranked 1–5. Finally, Jane wrote a draft about what she looks for in a favorite movie or TV show and this draft became the final product, a paragraph supported by reasons.

Assignment 1

1. Dragnet
2. Soap
3. WKRP in Cincinnati
4. Simon & Simon
5. Switch
6. All My Children
7. MASH
8. Saturday Nite Live
9. Dallas
10. Remington Steele
11. Felix the Cat
12. The Odd Couple
13. Sneak Previews
14. The Monkees
15. David Letterman

Assignment 2

Comedy	Drama
Soap	Dragnet
WKRP	Switch
Simon & Simon	Sneak Previews
Felix the Cat	All My Children
The Odd Couple	Dallas
MASH	
Saturday Nite Live	
Remington Steele	

Assignment 3

1. First Blood
2. Absence of Malice
3. Missing
4. In Search of the Holy Grail
5. Arthur
6. Raiders of the Lost Ark
7. Taps

Assignment 4

Male	Female
Paul Newman	Jessica Lange
Dudley Moore	Goldie Hawn
ohn Wayne	Natalie Wood
John Belushi	Jane Fonda
Alan Alda	Ingrid Bergman
Alan Arkin	Marsha Mason
Walter Matthau	Lynn Redgrave
Richard Dreyfuss	Jamie Lee Curtis
Tom Cruz	
Dustin Hoffman	
Eddie Murphy	
Dean Martin	

Assignment 5

When I watch a movie or TV I want to be entertained. So I am looking for something usually funny and fast moving In movies I must admit a nice looking male like Richard Gere does lift my interests. I also enjoy shows or movies that are about controversial issues like war, nuclear disasters, etc. They are not only interesting but educational I enjoy talk shows and I am looking for a funny intelligent host like David Letterman.

Not all directed writings are extended. Some are only single day writings aimed at the drafting stage of the writing process. Topics for these writings include "What if . . . " and "If you were . . . " types of questions. "What if you were president?" can elicit either a string of political impossibilities or a thoughtful paragraph. "If you were a butterfly about to break out of your chrysalis, what would you be thinking?" will usually result in at least a half page of thoughtful, descriptive writing. As with all directed writings students are free to use any point of view or take either a positive or negative approach. In these two examples, Shellie's response is very positive while Missy demonstrates an alternative viewpoint.

> I anticipate the moment when I break open the Chrysallis. I need to stretch my wings and body. I've outgrown my home, become cramped. I need to fly fast and hard like a turbulent river in the cool briskness of the morning. Then I will fly slowly and gracefully with the soft breeze, exaggerating every motion in the dancing sunlight. I will descend and alight on a soft, deep red rose petal dotted with small dew drops in the early morning to view my reflection in the clear babbling brook.
>
> Shellie

> If it's all the same to you I'd rather stay in my nice quiet shell. The world outside is hell—war, drugs, killing, suicide. Tell me why I should come out to a world like this. Tell me why Even with the sunshine—the world is a dark place to live. No peace, no light, no happiness. Maybe this is a pessimistic attitude—but isn't the world a pessimistic place? Aren't we doomed for darkness, destruction and death? I don't want to come out! Leave me alone.
>
> Missy

The most satisfying aspect of this system is that it is automatically successful. Students write daily and this writing requires thinking about the topic or idea and then putting these thoughts into words. A specific number of points are earned for each day's writing. The point value is the same whether the assignment requires a list or a paragraph. The rationale for equal point values is that while the assignments vary, each is equally valuable in promoting the writing process. The journal must be worth enough points to motivate students to write every day. No list of journal topics is posted so the only way to earn the points is to keep up and write every day, which is the goal. Grading journals is not time consuming since most do not have to be read as they were shared with the rest of the class. The teacher only has to count the entries and multiply by the point value to determine the "grade." I use a value of 5 points per day, which sounds minor until multiplied by 45. Collecting the journals randomly and without forewarning is another way to reinforce the daily writing habit. The journal entries are marked only with happy faces or positive comments (e.g., "This is excellent!" "Good job!" "Would you make me a copy of this one?" "I really like this one!") Journal writing samples are not covered with red corrections or negative comments.

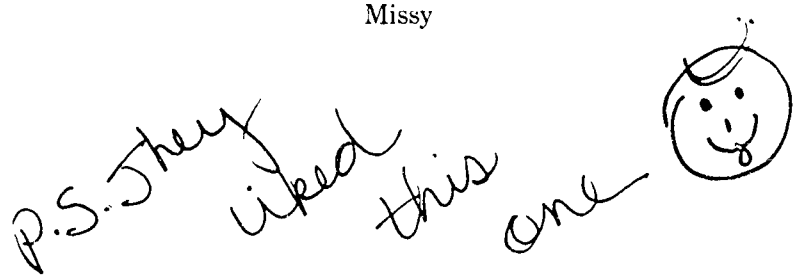
Extra credit is awarded to those who share their writing with the class. Sharing is simply reading aloud what one has written. The journal must be open and students must read exactly what they have written. Even less able students will notice that they have omitted words or made grammatical errors and correct and revise automatically as they read what they have written. Points for sharing are classified as "extra credit" because these are magic words to my students High schoolers consider themselves too cool to participate in a class discussion but they do not begrudge themselves extra credit thereby preserving their detached image.

The real pay off is not in teacher-awarded points but comes when the other students praise a particularly good piece of writing. The teacher starts this ripple effect by allowing students to feel they, too, have permission to praise other students' writings Negative

comments are NEVER allowed from anyone. When this praise comes, even the most hesitant writers realize that their words have power and their ideas have merit, no grade can match this peer praise. The following pieces of writing brought wide class approval. Missy, who usually shared and received positive responses made a note of the approval on this entry. Sally, on the other hand, seldom shared but was persuaded by a classmate to share the sandcastle piece. The smile which brought her paragraph so neatly to a close almost brought the class to tears.

I couldn't live without any of my senses. I would die. I couldn't imagine not seeing the first trace of recognition of a smile on a baby's face, or the smell of the early dawn on the farm, or the taste of the summer's first watermelon chilled to perfection. I couldn't imagine not hearing my mother's lovely voice singing "Sweet Little Jesus Boy" or the soft feel of a rose petal just starting to bloom. I feel the world was created for us to enjoy—and with the loss of any of my five senses I wouldn't enjoy any of it. I would die.

Missy



I am a tiny castle that a tired and lonely little girl built. She worked and worked on me all day long. As this little girl was all alone. She for once in her life had done something that made her smile. But as she slowly walked away she left her tiny foot steps in the soft cool sand. And as she turned to see that beautiful piece of work that she had done she saw that the castle had gone away like a smile on a little girl's face.

Sally

The teacher's share of the reward comes in seeing the steady improvement in the journal writing as the assignments move steadily away from lists to paragraphs to pages and in the students' increased willingness to share. The teacher can readily see improvement as the hesitant writers move into word play, a risk they would not normally take. In these examples Shalah moves from a list outline of superstitions to a short draft of an explanation about the origin of one. Shalah's second entry is typical of her writing—short, direct, just the assignment. The third assignment was to write a statement of opinion about the concept of luck. Shalah's approach here is word play—better than the assignment!

Assignment 1

Good Luck
1. If you find a penny and you pick it up, then all day you'll have good-luck.
2. Horseshoe
3. Four-leaf clover
4. Finger crossed
5. Rabbit's foot

Bad Luck
1. Friday the 13th
2. Don't let a black cat cross your path.
3. If you crack a mirror you get 7 years of bad luck
4. If a turtle crosses the road, it means it is going to rain.
5. Don't walk under a ladder.
6. Open an umbrella inside.

Assignment 2

The idea that opening an umbrella inside is bad luck was probably started by someone who opened an umbrella inside a building. They discovered after they had opened it, it probably began to rain.

Assignment 3

I think luck is a really lucky thing. Face it, without luck all lucky people would be unlucky by losing their good luck.

On the other hand, unlucky people would still be unlucky but also joined by all the lucky people who are now unlucky because their luck changed.

In choosing and arranging items for the list of directed writings, the teacher is free to seize current events or any topic of general interest at the time. One mid-May morning produced a crop of sunburned students so the list became "words or phrases that make you think of sunburn." The next day we turned this list into a prescription poem (noun-like-ing). Shellie's work is exemplary of some of the best on this assignment, even though she did not have a sunburn.

Assignment 1

List of Words and Phrases

1. Michelle
2. Stacy
3. Daniel
4. Red
5. swimming
6. lake
7. savage tan
8. skiing
9. sun
10. aloe cream
11. vinegar
12. alcohol
13. peeling
14. blister

Assignment 2

Prescription Poem

suntan
    in the sun
    at the lake
    on the slopes
like
    tough leather
    a bronze statue
    coconuts and bananas
fading
    when summer ends

Improvement in longer, more formal writing assignments is the final result of all this, but the jewel in the crown is Michelle, who says, "You know, I read some of my old journals last night. They were so awful and choppy." She smiles and continues, "My writing has gotten a lot better and smoother this year." She's right. I've seen the improvement all along and now she sees it, too. I've died and gone to heaven!

Description

Lewis Parkhill
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Tishomingo

After reading paper after paper containing descriptions of "blue skies," "cute puppies," "neat things," and "nice places," many teachers may be tempted to flee descriptive assignments forever to avoid a Rip Van Winkle-like slumber. The temptation should be resisted. Description is a use of words "concerned with the impression that the world makes on our senses" (Brooks & Warren, 1972, p. 196). Because it demands attention to the world outside us, descriptive writing sharpens observational powers, increases vocabulary, heightens word awareness and helps to bridge the gap from expressive writing based primarily on "I" to more formal, expository writings based on a subject.

James Moffett (1968) has classified writing into four "levels," ranging from the concrete and highly personal to more objective, abstract forms. He also points out (as has Piaget) that students' mental development follows a continuum from the concrete and personal to the abstract and impersonal. Thus, descriptive writing provides students the experience of moving beyond the private, personal world of "I" to an increasing awareness of and involvement with the outer world.

Often, however, when students begin descriptive writing, their efforts are conventional and predictable. Many students are strangely unaware that they can look and see freshly for themselves instead of simply repeating all the conventional descriptions they have grown up with. They may only see "the Burger Shop" and taste "delicious hamburgers," oblivious to a hand-lettered sign misspelling "burger" with the last two letters squeezed in one-half size. By accepting conventional naming, they accept a conventional view of their world and restrict their own individuality. Developing descriptive skills is, therefore, not only an essential part of lively writing, but also of personal growth.

This article will specify two descriptive forms, present language concepts crucial to effective description, outline a descriptive writing unit, and suggest ways to broaden the audience for student writing.

Descriptive Forms

Description may be (1) personal or impressionistic or (2) technical or scientific.

Personal or impressionistic description tells what impression the world has made on the writer's senses. Technical or scientific description gives information about a subject independent of a writer's personal response to it. For example, a real estate ad gives mostly technical information: 8 rm. farmhouse on 160 acres, bermuda pasture, 3 barns, 2 ponds. But an elated buyer's letter to a friend would more likely be personal: "The second pond is the size of a city block, and the bass in it are so hungry that grasshoppers tossed into it disappear in a splash within seconds after hitting the surface." Students should be able to use both descriptive forms. A good exercise might be to have them describe something (their house, their room, their favorite hangout) impressionistically and then describe it scientifically.

Language Concepts

Words send messages logically, emotionally, and figuratively, and an awareness of how these messages are sent is fundamental to description. Description teaches tough, logical lessons. It demands a wide, precise vocabulary. Not knowing the words "butte" or "dorsal fin" is a handicap when describing western Oklahoma or fish. Searching for the right word (and learning more words), becoming more aware of the denotative accuracy of language is part of description.

Denotatively, "house" and "home" might refer to the same building, but connotatively, emotionally, the words send quite different meanings. Pairing words is a good way to make connotation clear to students. Most students already can sense the difference between "fat" and "plump," "skinny" and "slender," and "look" and "squint," but an awareness of how connotation can assist a description may need some explanation.

Abstract-concrete can be clarified by listing so-called "pure" abstractions such as "honor" and "courage," and by asking students to specify to which of the five senses a word such as "cigar" sends messages. Constructing "abstraction ladders" will demonstrate the relationship between abstract and concrete language. To make "abstraction ladders," simply begin with a concrete word such as "doberman" as the bottom "rung" of the ladder and begin to climb toward abstraction—dog, mammal, animal, living thing. The process can also be modified by giving students words which require that they go down the ladder or go in both directions. The concepts of general and specific are quite similar to abstract-concrete.

Figurative awareness is more complex. Students may know what metaphor is and may be able to use it, but their figures are often clichés ("as blue as the sky," "as pretty as a picture"). Making them aware of the messages sent by fresh metaphors in reading assignments is an excellent way to teach the richness of message that is possible in figurative language. Handouts of overused figures can make students aware of figurative commonplaces Exercises in which students attempt fresh metaphors can also help. Urge students to go beyond simile which produces the most commonly overused figures Many students will not at first recognize the figurative language in "she perched on the ledge," but once they do, a wider use of figure is opened. How would a man behave who is "like a truck?" Does he "roll" into the room, "ears sticking out like rear view mirrors," "blaring" his opinions, "downshifting to low" whenever someone challenges him? The request to "describe X as if he/she/it were a Y" is a good way to encourage figurative inventiveness Finally, students must be aware that figurative language is more than imaginative play. It should be accurate and revealing. Comparing a man's ears to rear view mirrors may be cute, but if the ears are ordinary, the writer has stopped being descriptive and has misled the reader.

A Descriptive Writing Unit

What follows is an outline of an extended description assignment. Instruction in language concepts, descriptive forms, grammar, and mechanics works best when integrated into such a writing project because students are more likely to develop a personal commitment to writing subjects they have chosen. In this unit, some general guidance is given on topic selection, but students should make the final decisions about their descriptive subjects

I. Describe a small object. Personal objects make good subjects: belt buckles, keyrings, pens.
   A. Use concrete language; appeal to the reader's senses.
   B. Organize: open with a dominant impression ("My keychain looks like a sorry scrap of leather, but . . ."); describe systematically, trying to find an organization in the subject itself (left-to-right, top-to-bottom, part-by-part).

II. Describe a place. Beware of "grand" subjects such as "Disneyland" or "New York City." A favorite fishing pond or after-school hangout is more likely to produce fresh writing since less has been written and said about "ordinary" subjects.
   A. Use concrete, specific language. Choose words which reveal the effects of the place ("The juke box plays the latest David Bowie hit, and I can feel the bass notes vibrating the booth as I tap my foot in time.")
   B. Write a summary statement based on a dominant impression ("No serious bass fisherman could keep his heart from beating faster if he walked over the dam and saw the clear, mossless water of my dad's pond.")
   C. Organize: let the place suggest a structure (far-to-near, center-out, top-bottom, etc.).

III Describe a person. Grandparents (and older people) make good subjects. Their faces have more details to see than the "smooth skin" (see the potential for cliché and stereotype?) of boyfriends or girlfriends.
   A. Observe and gather details.
      1. Head (hair, eyes, nose, lips, ears, neck, cheeks, jaws, teeth, forehead, makeup, complexion)
      2. Hands (size, condition, hair, nails, knuckles, jewelry)
      3. General characteristics (height, weight, build, clothing and how it is worn, movements, mannerisms)
   B. Select distinctive features and write a dominant impression.
   C Organize: much more complex than the first two assignments, it should tell the "story" seen in the person; there is no easy formula

IV. Describe people talking (dialogue).
   A. Listen carefully to (or tape) a conversation; remember to observe how the people speak as well as what they say; use no more than three speakers to simplify the task.
   B. Transcribe the conversation, adding tag lines to identify the speakers and enough description to give the reader some sensory information about how the people spoke, (" 'Oh no!' Martha screamed, biting on three fingers.") Provide enough description to make the conversation meaningful and interesting to a reader. ("Rhonda doodled circles in her notebook as Kate spoke.")

V. Write a profile. This assignment includes all the skills of the previous writing assignments.
   A. Select a person; exercise care, be interested in him/her.
   B. Interview the person in an appropriate surrounding (a lawyer in his or her office; a bus driver in his or her bus; homes are also revealing); do your homework before the interview: what do you already know about the person? What do you want to find out? Be alert for memorable, usable direct quotations.
   C. Interview two or three other people who know the person you interviewed. What do they have to say about your subject?
   D Organize the profile; this is the most complex organization task yet, try to find the "story" in whom and what they are and arrange your information to reveal them; include all the descriptive strategies studied; be sure to:
      1. Describe the person.
      2. Describe the surroundings (what photo is on the desk? what hangs on the wall? what can you observe that you can link to the person?)
      3 Describe the person's speech by including revealing dialogue.

Publication

Combined with coaching during the composing process (at least a trial draft, a revised draft, and a finished copy), the profile assignment often produces excellent writing. The results deserve a wider audience than just the English teacher as evaluator. At the very least, class members can share their work with the rest of the class. Binding the profiles into a class book or duplicating selected profiles for bulletin boards are other possibilities. Because the profile comes after mastery of the individual description tasks and because students usually care about their grandparents, local characters, and local dignitaries, the writing underscores the value of description. This assignment can move student writers beyond narrow self-absorption, and provide them fundamental skills necessary for the more abstract writing demands of exposition.

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Reaching Reactive Writers: Using Pictures for Writing

June Richardson
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In my years of teaching I have been puzzled why some students could take a writing assignment and after a few minutes of thought write a very commendable piece while others spent the whole period and came up with a paragraph or so that was very poor. I realized that students have varying abilities, but no matter how much I worked with my poorer writers, I never seemed to be able to improve their skills. Even after attending the Oklahoma Writing Project and learning about freewriting, brainstorming, and levels of writing, I found that some students still did not write effectively. Then, I was chosen, along with twenty-four other Writing Project teachers, to go to England and work with twenty English teachers in learning about methods to teach writing. It was then that I read an article by Donald Graves.

Through his study of seven-year-old children, Donald Graves (1978) found that there are two basic types of writers, of course, with variations of each. These two types of writers are known as "reactive" and "reflective" writers. In Graves' study, reactive writers were usually boys while reflective writers were more often girls. According to Graves, "reactive behaviors are necessary coping behaviors that children supply because of writing conditions, developmental level, or both" (p. 193) He adds that all children may exhibit these characteristics in different types of writing conditions.

The reactive writers are characterized as those children who do not seem to have an inner voice. They vocalize, make many spelling errors, lose their place frequently, and must reread to find where they are. These writers do not have an idea flow, a feeling of what they are going to write about. Reactive writers need to practice ahead of time what they plan to write. They must rehearse through drawing pictures, conversation, block play, or construction Once they start to write they are the children who must be helped along with questions, such as "What would Mr. Jones do next to Johnny?" Without these two aids, reactive writers, as adults, will ". . . not feel able to write the most minimal communication, even a three-sentence 'excuse' note to their child's teacher" (Graves, 1978, p. 175).

Reflective writers, on the other hand, are ones who do not need to rehearse; they know what they plan to write. They have that inner voice and idea flow. These writers draw on reading, personal experience, environment, etc. for their ideas. Reflective writers also have a better sense of idea connection.

In a final comparison, reactive writers do not like to share their writing, but rather they put it away, as though with a sense of relief. It has been a chore to do, and, now, it is finished. Reflective writers enjoy sharing, like to have their work displayed, or included in a collection, and they may even want to illustrate it.

According to Graves, therefore, a teacher needs to provide experiences in many forms of media in order for reflective and especially for reactive writers to gain a sense of authority, giving them a basis for expression in their writing. When a teacher works only with one media—writing—the writing is affected. While both types of writers become frustrated when set time periods for writing are given, reactive writers especially need a longer time to set up what they plan to write.

If teachers are aware that these two types of writers do exist, they can prepare themselves to help the reactive writers with special techniques. Questions, models, dialogue, brainstorming, etc., could be introduced at the appropriate points in the writing process. Perhaps, teachers might help reactive writers to devise a goal for using their writing later, since those writers consider writing a task to finish.

Several years ago when I began to use pictures for teaching a descriptive writing unit, I had not read Donald Graves' essay. All that I knew was that the seniors whom I had attempted to teach the use of description as a tool in essay writing had not responded to the assignments in an effective way. We had read Dickens' "The Streets—Morning and Night." We had walked to the park and discussed sights, sounds, smells. Then they were to write an essay, using Dickens as a model, of the street on which they lived. Later, I had them write a description of their room with the same results. Most of the essays which were to appeal to one of the five senses failed miserably.

Then I questioned several seniors who, I felt, would level with me about why this assignment was done so poorly. Was it the method that I used, the topic, or what? Their answer surprised me. The students informed me that many of their peers did not want me to see where they lived or what type of home they had. Thinking I knew them fairly well, I realized that my picture of them was at school and in school-related activities. That is the place that they wanted me to stay. Then I began using the pictures.

The first time that I tried to use pictures I had the students cut out a picture of a person and write a character sketch, an error in my judgment, for they cut out famous personalities about whom much had been written and simply rewrote what they had remembered.

From then on I began to cut out pictures of interesting looking people from children to oldsters. I also gave them a guide to follow, such as the minimum number of sentences that I wanted. They were also to include colorful words which we had studied, such as *scarecrow, specter, azure, stench, pungent, dinging,* and *clanging*. Some students liked to do character sketches in rhyming couplets, parodying Chaucer's "Prologue." I gave extra points for rhyme. They were assigned to describe their character so well that anyone could pick out the picture that they wrote from. Sometimes I exchanged pictures between two classes and had them match them to the character sketches which I had hung up around the room.

After reading Graves' essay, I began to realize that the pictures helped those students who were the reactive writers to write. Boys, especially, who were verbally deficient could write better after seeing a picture. When we did parts of speech using pictures, after doing subordinate clauses, one of my seniors went out the door exclaiming, "Boy, I wrote a complex sentence!" He sounded as though he had climbed Mt. Everest, which, in a way, he might have as he was very poor in communication skills. The pictures acted as the prewriting that the reactive writer needed, and as they wrote I could wander around, reading over their shoulders, asking the questions to help generate more ideas for writing.

Now, I spend a few weeks each summer hunting through magazines, cutting out, and mounting pictures for a picture file, and I use them for many types of writing. I cut out travel pictures for students to write ads making the viewer want to visit that place. I use pictures of two or more people to have students imagine what the situation is and write dialogue. I also bring in punctuation and quotation skills in this exercise. I use pictures to teach parts of speech by giving the students an action picture and building kernel sentences of nouns plus action verbs. Then, we add adjectives and adverbs. We can even progress into dependent clauses.

Perhaps one of the most successful units is to use animal pictures I have the students ask two questions of the animal, and pass it to another student who answers the questions as descriptively as possible. This unit can be switched into research, if desired. The two questions can be serious, and the recipient can be sent to the library to find the answers. Stories can develop from animal pictures. Also, pictures of famous people, such as Edison, can be used instead of animals.

All of these units have worked well for me from fifth grade to twelfth. I have tried them at all levels. After reading the essay by Graves, I have realized that these reactive and reflective writers continue on to high school. The pictures help the reactive writers in high school to loosen up and write. They still have imaginations, usually dormant once they leave grade school because they are not challenged. Once freed, their imagination flows into some exciting description, stories, or dialogue. Many lower ability students, usually boys, can take off with pictures whereas they are mute with assignments that require more reflective thought. For these reasons I continue to use pictures and have had many good writing assignments, such as these.

Student Writing Samples

Prologue

A teacher is one who is hired to tolerate her house being egged, her dog being given an overdose of ex-lax, and the funny faces made by students when her back is turned to the class.

She is not supposed to tolerate gum chewing, note passing, or various projectiles lodged in the ceiling. She is expected to attend all school activities in any weather including the Southern Invitational Track Meet.

She is not supposed to cry when the copy machine gets stuck and makes 130,000 copies of her personal Christmas shopping list. She is expected to use her dustless chalk that produces clouds of dust and turns her clothing off-white

She is also expected to smile and acknowledge to all parents that their children are gifted.

Brian Ford

The Candy Crisis

Candy is one of man's greatest achievements. Why let it go to waste? The good Lord gave some chosen people the ability to invent candy and it is inexcusable not to fulfill His almighty purpose which is to eat it. If candy had been around in Moses' day there would probably be eleven commandments. "Thou shalt consume candy," would have surely made the list. We must eat candy.

Brent Taylor

Shoe Sadness

There once was a shoe of no special significance. The shoe, however, was totally comprised of leather. Its closest companions, a particular jogging shoe, and a unique hiking boot were also of leather.

Their town, Patenttown, was located near their archrival, Vinylville. Vinylville was on the verge of invading Patenttown and was going to burn their homes, yards, and laces. Oh, no! Not their laces!?! Yes, their laces.

Vinylville invaded Patenttown and Patenttown, which as observing the festive holiday of Kick-back, was unprepared. The Vinylvillains attacked and sprayed their latex over the town. The Patentites, however, would not help each other. They each went a different way. Their beautiful leather uppers and satin soft heels were now covered with sticky latex.

And as the major of Patenttown left the village he was heard to say 'If we shoes of leather stuck together, we would have had a fine day."

Trey Campbell

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The Arts: An Avenue to Writing

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Are my students the only ones who break-dance to "Celebration" by Kool and the Gang while discussing the similarities and differences in the art of Rembrandt and the paintings of his fellow countryman, Vincent Van Gogh? Perhaps so! These dancing art critics neither read nor write well; at least not well enough to be included in regular literature classes at the seventh grade level. What they do well is watch television, ride bikes, hang out, break-dance, listen to music, lay back and . . . wait. You can identify these students in your classroom: Many know all the words to the latest songs. Soap opera plots are as real to them as their addresses and phone numbers. Mr. T is their hero. They often know all the scores from all the games in the AFL, NFL, and NBA. Their spelling is often creative. Their excuses for unfinished homework could win awards for telling tall tales. Teachers read in disbelief their attempts at deciphering grammar. Their novel interpretations of historical events are not amusing. I know you recognize these hard-to-motivate students who sit listlessly in class.

I intervene in their ennui! I crash through barriers, invade their space, grope through the smoke, and search until I find the people inside. Surprisingly I find young people who are scared; often afraid that the reading and writing skills of others will forever evade their grasp.

One day, in a flash of insight, I realized that these students are interested in culture; they are interested in music, their music; they are interested in art, comic books, and cartoons; they love dancing, break, country, or disco. Good stories presented on television or in the movies keep them engrossed. The basic ingredients for understanding the culture are well-established, but they do not yet own the tools to unlock the secrets of our rich and diverse culture through reading and writing. Therefore, they fail; they also fail to learn the marvelous lessons found in the study of art, music, history, and literature. Extra efforts must be made to reach these students, and I am ready to take the 'unge! I try to improve writing skills by enriching their knowledge of our cul'ure through the use of music and art. I arm myself with a tape recorder, paintings, biographies, patience, my sense of humor, and lots of enthusiasm. I step into their world, their music, their art, and their dance I find myself in the midst of disco, rock, country, and gospel music. I lead them from the known into the unknown. Teacher becomes student and student becomes teacher. These learners move from our current pop culture into the broader culture of the world. I visit the adolescent world of rapping and breaking and gently entice them into the world of Van Gogh, Renoir, and Rembrandt. In return, my students write sensitive, creative, and meaningful responses to art, music, and literature.

The following techniques and methods have helped me broaden the cultural world of my students I hope that you will try them and in so doing find a new way to stimulate the writing of all your students, especially those hard-to-motivate or remedial students in your classes.

Music

The first song I play is the upbeat "Celebration" by Kool and the Gang. Before long, the most laid back, turned off student listens and relaxes. At the song's end, we informally brainstorm kinds of celebrations. Usually we go from the general holiday festivities to the more personal markings in a person's life, such as anniversaries, birthdays, or graduations. The act of brainstorming and writing words on the board is a vocabulary builder and these words can be used in spelling and vocabulary lessons. The second set of words is about emotion, activities, and feelings associated with celebrations. Now words cover all available chalkboards with usable vocabulary words. I take students through the multi-sensory, listening-speaking-reading-writing progression necessary for learning.

At this point the students and I spend from five to ten minutes on a "freewrite" about a celebration in each of our lives Freewriting is the fluency step in the writing process. This first writing is for ideas, phrases, and words, without regard for mechanical correctness I believe that when you ask students to share what they have written, teachers too must share This concept is a powerful one as it asks the teacher to play roles: role-model and continuing learner. With this in mind I read my writing to my students. After this I ask the writers to form small writing groups (three to five students) in order to read their compositions to each other. The small group is much less threatening than the large group and establishes other principles of learning. A writer needs an audience other than the teacher and immediate feedback is important. If students think their only audience is a teacher, and their only feedback is a red pencil critique of their writings, motivation is not always high After allowing time for reading, I ask each group to choose one person who is willing to share with the entire group While often reluctant at first, volunteers come forth and read their writings. I then make positive comments about ideas or phrases and ask other students to tell what they liked about the writing. This approach creates a situation where all students write different stories based on their own experience. One seventh grader's celebration composition is presented on the next page.

The next writing session involves revision by the students. I serve as a consultant at this point, moving freely among my students. Students may pass their papers among members of their writing groups and help each other first with content and later with correctness. Many times students who are poor spellers will offer very creative ideas and comments about revisions. Students who write the least, often receive praise from peers for their ideas or expressions. Writings are read aloud once more before they are turned in. By the time I receive them most mechanical errors have been corrected, and they are usually ready for the larger audience—the bulletin board, display case, anthology, or school paper. Knowing that their work will be displayed and read by their peers makes correctness and neatness an important part of the writing process.

Celebration

When I was two my sister and I had a birthday party. We had 14 people apiece come. We really didn't think 28 people would come but they did, so we had to buy another cake and more ice cream.

We got so many presents we had to put some of our toys in mom & Dads room.

Parties are always fun and exciting but the things I like most are the presents, the cake and ice cream, and the friends you have invited.

Amy Thomas

This additional writing activity can be used. Writing groups are given one vocabulary word from a song. They are asked to write as many words on paper as they can think of that belong to or go with that word. I write each main word on the board and in column form students from each group copy their list of words under the main word, thus generating even more words. Students then write several sentences using any of the words listed. I ask them to read their writings in their own group Then they choose one best sentence and copy it onto a sentence strip in large letters with magic marker. They cut each word out separately, shuffle and place them in an envelope. The writing groups exchange envelopes and try to recreate the sentence as it was written. Students quickly discover the complexity of the English language. This activity is quite competitive and can be expanded upon to teach grammar using the students' own language.

Many of today's songs can be adapted for classroom use. Before reproducing the words to any songs or using them in a lesson, I screen them for appropriateness. Many songs from the past graphically show the mood of the times and reflect the events of history. In order to more fully understand an era or period of history, add a human dimension to the printed page and enjoy the music of that day with your students

Art

I have always enjoyed art and appreciated artistic talent in others. Realizing that my interest in art and music was fostered by teachers who exposed me to culture throughout my education, now I hang paintings and display sculpture in my classroom hoping to make my students more culturally aware. It is an easy transition for me to combine art and music.

Vincent Van Gogh's life was one of disappointment and deprivation. Yet his paintings reflect a much different message. The song, "Vincent," written about his painting "Starry, Starry Night" is a marvelous vehicle for me to stimulate writing, reading and interest in the lives of others. First I discuss the paintings on display in the classroom. Then I read and tell some of the important facts about Vincent's life. His paintings speak for themselves and make friends for Vincent among all students. At this point I play the Don McLean recording of "Vincent." Many students are familiar with the song, but most have no idea of the powerful message contained in the song.

I ask the writers at this point to think of Vincent, the times he lived, his parents, his beloved brother Theo, and his art work. They may write in any form and from any point of view. They may, for that moment in time, become a friend, a parent, a person in a painting, or remain themselves. They may write prose, poetry, or a letter to Vincent. Free writing prevails, and we write for ten minutes. Two of my seventh grade remedial reading students expressed their thoughts and reactions this way.

Vincent

Vincent was a great man who felt love for everyone, but felt no one loved him. He was a great person, artist and friend. He painted better than anyone I've ever seen in my life and I am influenced by that.

I have another idol now, a person to look up to and admire. He drew beautiful portraits. Even though he suffered he was a great man, my friend, Vincent.

Sterling Ticeakhi

Life of Vincent

His pictures make me feel sad and happy because of the way he made them have feelings. You know we can be like that too if we do as he did, and use our time wisely. He makes his colors look real. The song, Vincent, shows how he expressed himself. You know it's sad when you know that he painted so many pictures and died before he had a chance to know that they were famous, and were worth a lot of money. I mean if only one of the ladies that he fell in love with would have just loved him and cared for him maybe he would know that his paintings were famous.

Patrick Hines

Many times I feel Vincent Van Gogh becomes the first historical figure they truly understand because they experience his humanness in so many ways. Men and women of history were flesh and blood people, and I feel this lesson especially helps the adolescent understand this concept.

Comparing the art of Rembrandt and Van Gogh quickly illustrates the differences between the Old Masters and the Impressionists. It can also illustrate the differences in style, voice, mood, and form. Writing and art have many similarities in purpose and structure. Artists tell stories with brushes; they influence the viewer with line, color, form, and texture, just as the writer influences the reader with style, form, voice and structure. Readers can "read" paintings in much the same way they read stories or books. Art lends itself easily to the understanding of comparison and contrast, repetition and theme Because of the concrete nature of art the terms can be more easily understood and transferred to the more abstract process of writing. Discussion of art and artists opens the way to a vast array of topics for further reading and writing.

Picasso tells us a great deal about *The Man of La Mancha* in his painting "Don Quixote." The song, "The Impossible Dream," from the musical about Cervantes' comical but lovable character, along with the painting help students understand this sensitive story. "Mona Lisa" is a painting but it also is the name of a popular song. There are many possibilities for integrating art and music to help teach reading or writing skills. Find the ones most suitable for your own students.

Often students do not appear to value their writings and immediately throw away returned papers. I secretly save all their writings, until I have fifteen or more. They are always amazed at the numbers of stories, reports or freewritings they have done. Pleased at their progress as writers, they are often eager to re-write or re-copy a composition, and share once again with their classmates. Now that they are internally motivated, they happily begin to compile individual books of writings. I plan several class periods at the beginning of this project for them to select, edit, or re-do any work. Since they will continue to add to their books, we use brads or paper fasteners to bind books together. They begin to order their compositions, consider titles, and design a cover. Several weeks will go by before I once again distribute "their books." The writings about Vincent Van Gogh are always near the front but I have noticed this year that Michael Jackson is becoming a popular subject for biographical writings Perhaps, it is time for me to find a creative way to use the current hit "Thriller."

These writing books are also literature and students need to know that their words have power just as the words of famous authors have power. As they share their books with other students and display them at parent meetings or open house, they realize that their words can cause emotions of joy, fear, sadness, and sometimes tears. Not only have they become more culturally aware, I believe they now feel more certain of their own place in our society, and in the words of Vincent Van Gogh in a letter to his brother, Theo:

> When I saw you again, and walked with you, I had the self same feeling which I used to have, as if life were something good and precious which one must value, and I felt more cheerful and alive (Stone, 1976).

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Using Vacation Slides in Teaching Composition

Peggy J. Price
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Recently I visited Assisi, Italy where I purchased several postcards, a book, and sixty slides of the Basilica of San Francesco, of frescoes by Cimabue and Giotto, and of the Byzantine crucifix of San Damiano. My visit was inspirational and educational, and I wanted to share it with my seniors. My problem was finding a way to include those items in the curriculum so they would have a meaningful place in either the survey of English literature or in the teaching of composition. I found my answer in writing about lyric poetry.

The August 1975 issue of *Reader's Digest* contained an article entitled, "Francis: A Saint for Today." The point of view and general information interested me. The most important fact that I gained from the article, however, was the name of a lyric poem written by St. Francis. That poem was the key to incorporating word study, reading, and viewing in composition.

First, I assigned twenty-five vocabulary words that students defined and used in sentences. This exercise was necessary since the article about St. Francis contained words that were unfamiliar.

The next day as a pre-reading writing exercise, I asked my students to use as many of their vocabulary words as possible in writing a paragraph or short paper. Such words as *plaintiff, venerated, austere, disdain,* and *admonition* led several students to write short stories about criminal justice. After working with these words and better understanding their meanings, my students were ready to read the article about St. Francis.

Reading the article, "Francis: A Saint for Today," aloud was assignment two. Oral reading offers practice in reading to a group and the opportunity to discuss points of interest as they occur rather than waiting until the end of the story Following the discussion, students answered questions about the story. These were not short-answer or multiple choice questions that depended on recall; they were questions of comparison, definition, analysis and evaluation. In this case each student had only one question to answer, and no two questions were the same.

The following day the students met in groups of five of six and read the papers they had written Each group then selected the best and most interesting question and worked together to develop it. Later, one person from each group read the presentation to the class.

The third activity was my responsibility. We viewed and discussed the slides. This activity took approximately forty minutes and depended heavily on my own preparation. Most of the information about the slides came from the book about Assisi. After viewing the slides, I asked the students to write a twenty-five word sentence describing something we had discussed, something they had seen, or some experience that the slides reminded them of. By eliminating some words and reshaping the structure, we had poems in response to our class activity.

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One of my postcards contained the lyric poem, "Canticle of the Creatures," mentioned in the *Reader's Digest* article. I distributed copies of the poem, and we read it, discussed its meaning, and reviewed the characteristics of a lyric poem (i.e., mood, description, style, and sound). My students were then ready for assignment four, to prepare a paper evaluating a lyric poem. For this task, I divided the class into groups of three. Together they discussed the mood and theme, and then each group member selected a topic (e.g., description, style, sound) and prepared a paragraph for the group essay.

Revision required a full class period. Each group read all paragraphs and discussed necessary changes that had to be made to make the paragraphs agree with each other and with the theme. The group also constructed a thesis statement that showed how the different elements of the poem supported the theme. After adding an introduction and a conclusion, they were ready to proofread and recopy the papers for presentation.

I solved my problem of finding a way to share my vacation slides with my senior English classes by using those slides to create interest in composition

Writing: A Key to Understanding the Past

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I hear . . . and I forget.
I see . . . and I remember.
I do . . . and I understand.
—Chinese Proverb

This proverb contains an important message for educators of all disciplines. The "doing" might be in the form of hands-on experiences, manipulating shapes and solids at a math center, or role playing. Role playing entails imagining and speculating which Martin, D'Arcy, Newton and Parker (1976, p. 86) refer to as:

> the linked processes which . . . can help children make sense of new information which they cannot easily (or even possibly) experience directly . . . in historical stories the past always has to be *envisaged* if it is to be meaningful . . . If pupils are encouraged to put themselves in the picture they are more likely to perceive the significance of the facts . . We wouldn't claim to understand fully what happens when children's imagination is brought into play, but in its widest sense we would regard imagination as that mental process which enables a person to make his own connections . . .

Engaging their imaginations in role-playing and then writing from the assumed characters' viewpoints will enhance students' connections because they are allowed to look out on the world from many windows. They relate to important events witnessed by their characters, giving them a personal stake in history.

The study of the past is intriguing, yet confusing, because it lies scattered about in many pieces, and there is no simple way that these pieces can make "a whole picture." George F. Kennan, a noted historian, said:

> One of the first things that dismayed me, as I tried to put pen to paper with a view to relating historical events, was to discover the hopeless open-endedness of the subject of history itself: its multi-dimensional quality, its lack of tidy beginnings and endings, its stubborn refusal to be packaged in any neat and satisfying manner (in Murray, 1968, p. 40).

While children gain historical information through textbooks and other sources such as tradebooks, they also need to "live" in the period they are studying. Role-playing and writing help bring history to life. On the following pages, writing activities that can be used to help students learn about the people and the events of history and how they "fit in" in the puzzle of the past are described. These three writing activities reflect topics in my school's curriculum, but any event or period of history could be used as the content of these assignments. Although the samples which follow each activity are from fifth and sixth graders, the assignments can easily be adapted for younger or older students.

(Reprinted from "The Experience of Writing History" in the Spring 1960 issue of *Virginia Quarterly Review*, George F. Kennan.)

Diaries

As a part of a unit on the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, the students were to imagine themselves as immigrants. They were to write a diary entry or entries describing their feelings as they came to America. The following four steps outline my procedure:

1. **Brainstorming**
   Ask students to brainstorm words related to the Statue of Liberty. On the chalkboard, write down their suggestions under the heading, Statue of Liberty. Repeat the procedure for Ellis Island.

2. **Writing**
   Ask students to write a diary entry from an immigrant's point of view using some of the words and ideas from the two word lists. They may include events such as leaving the homeland, seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time, arriving on Ellis Island, and going through immigration.

3. **Editing and Sharing**
   Divide the class into small groups to share diary entries. Instruct students to give feedback to their group members. Members tell each other what they liked best about each writing and then tell one thing that could be improved or corrected. This peer-editing will usually take care of punctuation and spelling errors, but students need to be reminded to check for clarity also. The teacher should move from group to group and give suggestions when necessary. Each group may select one writing to be read aloud to the class.

4. **Providing an audience**
   Collect the diary writings and compile a book for the classroom or school library.

   Here is one fifth grader's diary entry:

   Dear Diary,

   > Today as I was leaving my grandmother's home I remembered the day my parents and I left Czechoslovakia to go to The United States of America. My father had bought 3 tickets from the money he had saved for my 13th birthday. The inspectors looked us over as we boarded the ship. He took our tickets and held them tightly. When we got there a lot of other people were watching us very carefully. We started up some stairs, when we got to the top some more people marked letters of chalk on our shirts. Mine said S.I.. Later I found out that meant Special Inquiry. A doctor said I had heart disease. Since I was 13 I had to go back to Czechoslovakia by myself because my parents didn't have anymore money to buy return tickets. That's why I am living with my grandmother in Czechoslovakia
   >
   > Sheri Williams

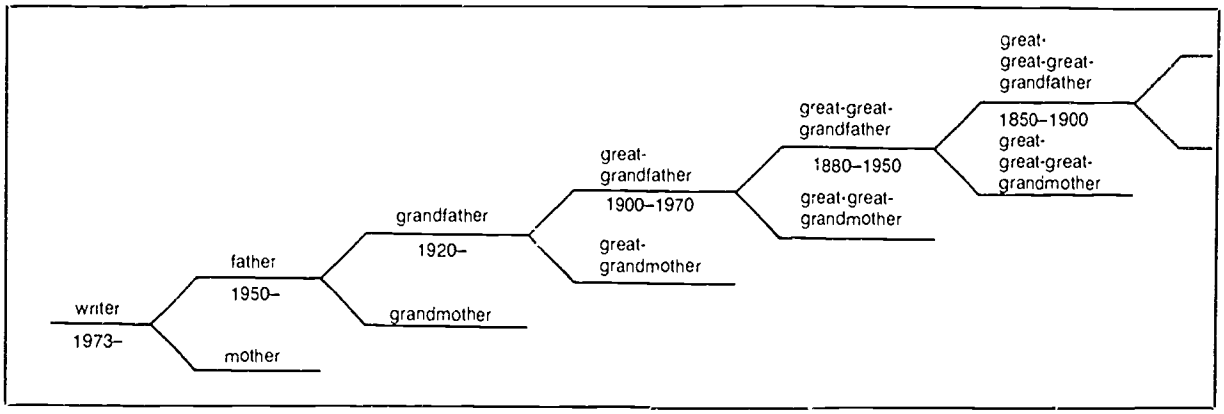
Through these diary entries my students gained a special understanding of immigrants' dreams, fears, and frustrations as they arrived in this country.

Tracing

Tracing provides an opportunity for students to understand the sequence of historical events through writing from the viewpoints of their forefathers, whether real or invented. Working from the present to the past, they gain a feeling of continuity while researching and writing about events that happened during the lifetimes of their fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers.

1. **Timelines**
   Have students work in small groups to develop timelines of U.S. presidents, inventions, modes of transportation, wars, explorers, territory acquisitions, etc. Make reference materials available in the classroom and arrange for small groups to work in the library. Provide each group with identical, premeasured lengths of butcher paper, divided into fifty year periods from 1000 AD to present. Have students record the important events they have researched on their timelines. Display the student-made timelines on a classroom wall, one beneath the other so that students can easily refer to them. Also, display commercial maps, charts, and other reference materials related to historical figures and events.

2. **Genealogy chart**
   Draw a genealogy chart on the chalkboard similar to the one illustrated below, but without the words *father, grandfather*, etc. Explain that the purpose of a genealogy chart is to trace a family history. Ask students to supply the words to complete the chart. Next, provide students with individual copies of the chart and have them complete their charts with the real names of their ancestors or by inventing a family tree.



3. **Brainstorming**
   Explain to students that in this activity, they will assume the role of each ancestor listed on their genealogy chart and write a diary entry or letter from the person's viewpoint. Then ask students to brainstorm topics they might want to include in their ancestor writings. Compile their ideas in a chart to be posted in the classroom. The following ideas were suggested by one fifth grade class:

Things to Write about

medicine	fashion	health
government	entertainment	art
presidents	music	inventors
family life	science	occupations
religion	transportation	books

4. **Writing**
   Have students first write from the point of view of the "writer" or present day character on their genealogy charts. Then students move back through history, writing as their real or invented father, grandfather, great-grandfather, etc. Each writing should be on a separate sheet of paper and labeled with the ancestor's name, relationship to the writer, and dates of birth and death. Encourage students to refer to the timelines and "Things to Write about" Chart in order to add details and be historically accurate in their writings.

This writing assignment moved easily and smoothly for my fifth graders because I asked them to invent a present-day character and trace that character's ancestors and then to write from those characters' viewpoints. In this way, they were able to concentrate on events and the times in which these events took place, rather than on searching and waiting for family information that might be limited An invented family can be traced back farther, providing ancestors who have lived through many historical events.

This activity does not preclude an actual genealogy project. Interest in family trees is a natural outgrowth of ancestor writings and can serve as a springboard for later assignments. So, in addition to learning more about the continuity and sequence of events through writing, the students are introduced to a new hobby they may wish to pursue.

The following ancestor tracings were written by Andy Hutchison, a fifth grade student.

Writer: Michael Ford

My name is Michale Ford, I am 9 years old I was born in 1973. I live in Oklahoma. Ronald Reagon is president, but the election is happening now. The Summer Olympics are coming up too.

Rock and break dancing are very popular. My favorite groupes are Kiss, Def Leopard, and Huey Lewis.

Father: James Ford

My name is James Ford,
I was born in 1950. Truman was president
in 1953 The "Beetles" are a popular music
group. The Hydrogen Bomb was made.
'57 chevys can be see among the
streets today. The Korean War is
still going on.

Grandfather: Richard Ford

My name is Richard Ford,
I was born in 1910. William H. Taft
was president in 1915 The Boy Scouts of
America was founded the same year
I was born, in 1910. In 1911 the first
trancontinental airplane flight happened.
People are driving in cars now,
but some people are
still riding horses and driving
carriges.

Script Writing

In this third activity, students become characters from the Middle Ages. Through assuming the roles of persons living hundreds of years ago, my students become much more involved in our study of that period. The children begin by freewriting for a few minutes each day to "discover" what they know and have learned about the Middle Ages. Lee McKenzie, another OWP Teacher Consultant who has used this approach with college students, explains, "I have often been amazed at the powerful writing that results. Students almost seem to become the character about whom they write. Certainly they better understand that person's emotions and attitudes" (1983, pp. 5–6).

From this freewriting activity, my students write scripts for their characters to be presented for an audience of students and parents. My students are highly motivated in this writing activity because they have a clear sense of purpose and audience. The following steps outline the procedures:

1. **Developing a character**
   Ask students to reflect on their daily freewritings, choose a character typical of the medieval period, and then write a description of that character's life. Encourage students to add details about family life, occupations, social classes, dress, food, etc. Students share their writings in small groups and receive help in revising and editing their compositions.
2. **Getting ready**
   Help the class choose a stage setting and theme for presenting their scripts. We used the setting, King Richard's Fair, a crossroads with a pie man's booth, where all our characters could interact naturally. The students work together constructing and painting a simple stage set, and characters prepare their own simple costumes. After listening to all the compositions, students decide on the sequence in which they will present their scripts. It may be necessary for some students to make minor revisions in their writings to reduce redundancy and to ease the transition from one character to the next. Students may also want to choose music and other sound effects to accompany the readings. Students rehearse the production several times, sometimes giving up some recess time for practice. For the production, students walk onto the stage and read their scripts. Emphasis is placed on effectively reading rather than memorizing their compositions.
3. **The production**
   Invite parents and other classes to attend the production. Have students wait off stage and, one at a time or in small groups, appear on stage to read their scripts. Appoint one student to serve as the announcer.
4. **Follow-up**
   Ask the local newspaper to print an article about the production with photographs and some of the students' writings. As an alternative, compile students' compositions into a class book.

The following two scripts were written by sixth graders:

I am an artist at the fair of King Richard. Sophonisha is my name. I'm selling my pictures and paintings at a crossroad booth.

Lately it has been hectic with all of my apprentices running around trying to get ready for the fair. By the way, an apprentice is a person who learns his/her trade by going to a person that is a master at that trade and watching what they do and helping them at what they do. I, myself, have six apprentices all in their teenage years.

Once we got to the fair we sold the paintings we had very fast. I was amazed at one particular family from Florence who said they would pay me 1,000 pounds to paint a Madonna in their home.

After my apprentices had sold all of our paintings (which did not take very long) we went back to my studio and started work on more paintings for people who had requested them.

Just before I went to bed I realized how lucky I was to have the Renaissance, or rebirth of art and learning to happen. Because in the past few years I hadn't had almost anybody buying my paintings. Then when the Renaissance did happen I became very famous!

Julie G.

Ah, what a grand day for a fair. Oh, here comes a spectator. Bet you've never seen anything like this trick I'm about to demonstrate. I'm a master wizard I live over the hill in King Richard's fortress. Ah, there's the king himself. I really can't stand it around these beggars once I've had the comforts of living the wealthy life. But, my life really isn't half bad, I have my own room but all the entertaining I have to do for it. Every 6th day of the lord's feast I have to entertain for his guests. He says, "Merlin, wrap this evening up with some entertainments." The joker, I'm really concerned with him, I think he's gone mad. After he performs, he bounces around and this sort of thing. The king says, "Good show, Clovis." Clovis walks off mocking him instead of taking the appreciation. Here allow me to perform for you I take a simple small yellow sphere and put it in my hand. Next I turn my hand around. Now I give you the opportunity to check my hand. (Sphere isn't there.) Check my other hand. (I throw up glitter.) Time for me to go. (I walk off.)

Jason Canter

The students found this writing activity to be a satisfying way to learn about the past and also to perform onstage without the worry of memorizing lines. Presenting their compositions orally in a theatrical setting encouraged some of my students to write longer and more formal scripts.

These three activities provided an effective way to integrate writing with a content area such as history and to increase students' interest in both writing and the content area. Through writing, my students developed greater fluency, and through historical investigation, they learned essential research skills. In addition, I found that my students took greater pride in their work, taking care to report information accurately in their compositions. Most importantly, history came to life for my students as they assumed the roles of historical figures through diary, tracing, and script-writing activities.

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We Raised the Titanic

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Popcorn Philosophy

Seeds of thought, like popcorn,
need to be incubated,
Warmed, tossed about, examined,
Turned this way and that
Until fully developed philosophies surface,
Obscuring the inferior, the blemished,
Offering only mature, plump morsels
of wisdom for review by sages and poets.

W.N.W.

Entrenched in fertile soil, literature provides an excellent root system for a variety of writing assignments.

Hemingway has said that fiction is more real than truth. Indeed it is, for authors highlight only the most significant experiences relating to their characters, placing each one, along with both strong points and imperfections, in a showcase for viewing.

As a result of this magnified view of characters, even students who are shy and inarticulate can identify with fictional people without becoming vulnerable. Neither their teachers nor their classmates need ever know the innermost thoughts they formulate as they extract meaningful material from their own lives, material which will provide them with a wealth of ideas to use in their writing efforts.

In a similar way, nonfiction also offers a seedbed of ideas for student writers. As they read, at the junior high and high school levels in particular, whether the material be an in-class or an out-of-class assignment or for entertainment or information, they gather ideas, ideas which can be developed when they are asked to write assignments relating to the material being read.

In his excellent book, *The Golden Book on Writing*, David Lambuth states that good writing:

> . . comes only from clear thinking, set down in simple and natural speech, and afterward revised in accordance with good usage. The adequate vocabulary and the feeling for this good usage and idiom which are so essential to good writing can be acquired only by wide and intelligent reading. And in no other way whatsoever (1976, p. 4).

Writing assignments based on their reading experiences give students a buoy to hold them up until they learn to swim.

After participating in the Oklahoma Writing Project in 1979 and again in 1980, I came home afire with ideas for teaching writing more effectively. Eager to try up-to-date methods and techniques which I felt would be the answer to my students' problems, I began to search for a project, one that would involve everybody. I also hoped for something that would require some in-depth thinking as well as provide a variety of opportunities for writing activities.

Ultimately I came to the conclusion a good writing assignment based on a literary selection could be adapted for any class. The fall following my second exhilerating experience with the OWP in 1980, the movie, "Raise the Titanic," based on Clive Cussler's (1966) best seller by the same name, began showing at a local theater.

"That's it," I thought, and at that moment, my most successful writing project, "Raise the Titanic," was born.

As far back as grade school, I had practically cut my teeth on actual accounts of the famous ocean liner, Titanic. Although the great ship had sunk several years before I was born, disasters—especially those at sea—have universal appeal. I would be able to add considerable input, and the current interest in the recent book and movie, as well as contemporary accounts of the actual expeditions underway to locate the sunken ship and its great fortune in jewels, would serve our purposes well. All these factors provided a strong link with the past, present, and future, a link I had been hoping to find.

Two or three weeks before we did any writing (the movie was still showing), I began building interest in each class by passing around copies of Walter Lord's, *A Night to Remember* (1978), which we used as a definitive source rather than the fictional *Raise the Titanic*. I could only locate a few copies, including my own two illustrated ones, for each group of thirty or more, but that number proved adequate.

To get them emotionally involved early on, I asked them to each write a paragraph detailing three reasons they would like to avoid a certain kind of death. I then read a few of their papers aloud to the class. We discussed the tragic number of lives lost in the disaster (at the end of the book, Lord lists the names of both survivors and those who died), the changes in maritime rules and regulations brought about as a result of the disaster, and several of the many dramatic events related to the sinking.

At this point, to get them to use details rather than generalizations, I passed out a set of questions, the first of two. Through these questions, students assumed the role of fictional persons recounting their experiences in the disaster. They appeared to be the key to the success of the project, for immediately I had one hundred percent participation. My list included the following questions:

As a rule, do you like traveling by ship?
Did you have a premonition that you should not have taken this voyage?
Are you sorry the voyage is about to end? (prior to the mishap)
Why are you on this ship?
Are you English, American, or what nationality?
Has it been a good voyage up to now? Why? Why not?
Who told you about hitting the iceberg?
Give that person's exact words.
Give your exact reply.
What did you do first?
Was that a logical thing to do?
What did the water look like? Describe it with a simile, a metaphor, and other words of description.

What had the water looked like on other days?
Do you act braver than you really are?
How did you spend those two and one-half hours?
Tell about someone you wish you could help.
Describe your emotions at different times
Do you plan to be a hero or a heroine? Why or why not?
Are you angry, sad, or what?
Do you fear death?
What message would you like to send to someone?
What was important to you yesterday that seems foolish now?
Does the time pass slowly? Why or why not?

A few days later, after they had answered their first set of questions, I asked them to work in groups of three, and gave each group a checklist which I called a "self-test":

Did I make my answers believable by using detail?
Did I generalize?
What audience did I have in mind?

After the group work, I gave them the second set of questions:

In one to three sentences, tell (subtly) who you are, why you are on board, and how the voyage has gone up to this time (prior to the accident).

In two or three sentences, tell how you learned the Titanic had hit an iceberg, something you said (a direct quote), and what you did.

In three to five sentences, give your innermost thoughts, and tell what you are planning to do to survive.

In three to five sentences, relate your most fearful moment and pinpoint it with an example which *could be* a simile or a metaphor.

Use one or two sentences to tell of your rescue. Using additional sentences, tell how you expect it to affect your future or the future of others.

If time permits, write an introduction and conclusion to your answers. Remember, they should tie your composition together; they are the wrapping for your package.

Although some of the same material was repeated in the second set, students who had been allowing their ideas to "cook on the back burner" wrote more in-depth answers the second time, greatly improving the quality of earlier efforts

Each day I gave them a new checklist and again had them work in groups. In this way, they evaluated their own papers

On the whole, the month-long project was easily graded despite the reams of writing. I insisted they keep every paper, allowing me to see at a glance the amount and quality of their work. I made myself readily available, attempting to say something to every student at least once as I walked around the room each class period. They shared eagerly, urging me to read their efforts (silently at this point). Occasionally, someone would ask about a mechanical or a style problem, but content was the important thing, both from my viewpoint and theirs

Excerpts from Students' Unedited Papers

. . I thank God for letting me live. But when I lay awake at night after all these years I still hear cries for help.

It was a cold cloudy night as the huge luxury liner called the Titanic sailed smoothly through the ice cold waters of the Atlantic. Suddenly the ship came to a direct halt as something scraped against its bow. No need for panic or even worry, a ship like this could never sink.

Papa thought that a cruise to America on the first voyage of the much-published Titanic would make me forget Jason and would lift me out of my depression But he had been terribly wrong.

I am a passenger aboard a great ship. the Titanic. My name is irrelevant because I am sure to die; I feel it is my time. I will try to tell of the events this evening in the time remaining for me. . . . I am going to give this letter to a lady on the last lifeboat.

Spring came into the year as a beautiful thing. and was accentuated by the launching of the Titanic. The whole world stopped and held its breath at this double beauty. Crime, however, stops at nothing. as I soon discovered. Since I had just solved the notorious "Jack the Ripper" case. the English mafia, of which Jack was a member, had started to close in on me.

I boarded the Titanic in Great Britain, trying to get back to the United States, because I wanted to get away from all the bickering in our family. I had been in Great Britain staying with my mother and stepfather.

I stood on the deck of the Titanic and watched the sun sink below the horizon. The icy waters splashed against the sides of the boat but the sounds from the party in the lounge interfered with the solitude of the early evening. I stood there for quite awhile listening to the nighttime sounds, but soon the peaceful evening would turn into the most horrifying night of my life.

"The Captain's table," I thought "The captain's table. What should I wear? What should I say? To eat dinner with the captain of the Titanic? Who would've thought?

It started out to be the best birthday present I'd ever had. I couldn't believe it when Mom and Dad handed me two tickets for the Titanic's first voyage.

. . I guess the scars of that night will never heal.

I did some evaluation holistically, doing it in such a painless manner I don't believe they realized what was happening. Listing on the board three or four things they had done well, I chose examples from their work—a few dramatic phrases and a descriptive sentence or two—pointing out the value of working emotion into every sentence. I also listed a few examples of things they were not doing too well: weak sentence structure, illogical statements, incorrect facts. and lack of detail. The better students strove to correct their weaknesses while the poor students, caught up in the tide, scarcely realized they were culprits, but every student had become involved.

After everyone had written at least two or three pages in answer to the two sets of questions, they wrote telegrams. The elegrams, an excellent device originated by Neil Postman (1966) for teaching conciseness, were to be written from the viewpoint of a passenger or crew member and to contain no more than ten words. The sender was to use the word STOP

at least twice but no more than three times in lieu of punctuation. One boy pretending to be a deck steward tendered his resignation.

My own telegram (at OWP I had learned the joy and the validity of writing with my students) read as follows:

Excellent project STOP Fun STOP Students work as hard as teacher STOP

Excitement accelerated. Class artists volunteered to design a cardboard replica of the ship, consequently launching their fifteen-foot model in time to give our writing efforts a dramatic touch for Open House.

Because most assignments were serious, I often changed the tempo by going from serious to humorous, from humorous back to serious; from prose to verse, and back to prose again. One day I asked them to write terse verses (a broad generalization followed by two short rhyming lines):

The rich little girl sighed as her suitcase was thrown overboard:

My petticoat
Just went afloat!

What the builders of the Titanic said concerning the size of the ship:

Gigantic
Titanic!

The Captain's last remark as the Titanic sank:

This boat
Don't float!

Although "Raise the Titanic" has been one of my richest teaching experiences, I may never use the subject again. Like my students, I need the challenge of developing new projects. If I am not excited, they certainly will not be.

Owing to the recent amount of news coverage regarding D-day, I may plan a project this fall based on World War II, emphasizing concentration camps, different types of soldiers, and other related topics. I can already hear the protests from students who do not consider war a suitable subject for discussion. If, however, I make careful preparations, plan enough creative assignments, unearth the right book to use, and sprinkle in a generous amount of discussion, "we" can have a great learning experience as we write.

Of course, there is always the possibility I may become a war casualty; but like any good soldier, I'm willing to die for the cause. After all, I didn't go down with the Titanic.

Guidelines for a Writing Project Based on Literary Selections

1. *Choose a subject with exciting possibilities and allow at least one month for the project.*

   At least a week before I asked them to do any writing, I read several excerpts from *A Night to Remember*, our definitive source, and encouraged discussion. They needed time to absorb the historical data and time to "simmer their ideas on the back burner."

2. *Base the project on a book students have read or would like to read.*

   I chose Walter Lord's *A Night to Remember*, an actual account of the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, because many students had read it previously, and because of the interest in Clive Cussler's current best seller, *Raise the Titanic*, and the movie based on the book.

3. *Visit the library to obtain additional information.*

   We spent most of our time reading early newspaper accounts of the tragedy, noting the many discrepancies.

4. *Follow a similar plan for each writing assignment.*

   I began with class discussion, individual writing, reading in groups of three (responding, sharing, and rethinking), and followed with more writing and rewriting.

5. *Place as little emphasis on grades as possible.*

   I had them keep all their papers, in order that I could see, at a glance, the amount and quality of work they had done.

   For one assignment I asked each student to highlight his best sentence with a yellow marker and his weakest one with a green marker. They then each wrote two sentences telling why the first sentence was good and the second was bad.

6. *Help them to reach an audience other than their own classmates.*

   I displayed the shorter assignments (telegrams, terse verses, and a few essays) on a bulletin board near the principal's office.

7. *Do much sharing and enjoying.*

   I was reminded again and again that students will write willingly when they believe they have something worthwhile to write.

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Postman, Neil. Lecture given at The University of Colorado, Boulder, CO, 1966.

Letters in the Classroom

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The day is grim; your supervisor dictated six letters in two hours, each needing to be posted before five o'clock. The stereo you got six months ago is on the blink, but you don't remember where the locally authorized service center is, you'll write the company tonight to find out. Upon arriving home tired, overworked, and hot, you cringe at the handfull of bills in your mailbox, but set them aside quickly when you spot the letter postmarked Chicago, from your college roommate. Ripping it open, you settle down in your favorite chair, engrossed in the news and humor of your friend.

Adults use correspondence often, probably more than expository writing, but I'm convinced this area is often slighted in our schools. I remember composing banal friendly letters or thank-you notes that were sent only to the teacher's desk. In the past several years I've used some exercises with my students that I hope will not seem banal to them twenty years later. Furthermore, at least as important as my own assignments are the ideas I've gotten from listening to English teachers, as well as teachers in other disciplines, discuss lessons that I realize could be carried out via letters. Why not use correspondence in science, social studies, possibly math, and of course English? Why not use letters at all grade levels? (Even young children can dictate letters.)

I begin with the following assumptions: First, written communication is and will remain important, even in this age of video. Second, succinct language is important. Third, it is sometimes preferable not to propose opinions, advice, or reactions spontaneously as we would do in person or over the phone, but in writing where we can carefully consider our positions. And, finally, as I observe students passing notes in and out of class, I realize that letter writing satisfies a human need to communicate. Since we cannot always talk, many of us express ourselves with written words, whether informally or in formal communiques.

We're probably all aware of the importance of letters in literature. In Paul's letters to the Ephesians, the Corinthians, and others, we have evidence in the New Testament that correspondence was used for a purpose. Intended for quite different audiences, St. Paul's epistles vary in tone. Throughout her epistolary novel, *A Woman of Independent Means* (1978), Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey also writes letters regularly to different people. As St. Paul did, she shifts her voice with each audience, she is understandably more formal with friends than with her husband or children. Why this novel seems so useful to me is that the study of such a book, or merely the practice of writing basically the same information to several different people, forces students to acknowlege levels of diction. Surely an assignment asking students to describe a single event to three different people, or to describe the enjoyable or miserable time they are having on a trip would bring to light the need for different words, especially if the recipients of the letters or post cards were as different as a girlfriend, a parent who initially opposed the trip, and a lawyer who sponsored the trip.

When I think of such an assignment in light of *A Woman of Independent Means*, I am reminded of one of my students who responded to an examination question via letters. She had just read Hailey's book and was impressed by her technique. After we had studied King Arthur's court and times, I asked each student to create a new knight for the Round Table, give him an original, fitting name, and send him on a sixth century quest. My student wrote as a knight, first to his ladylove, then to his rival brother, and finally to his aged mother. She wrote three or four letters to each of these recipients, each expressing either anxiety, conceit, or self-pity, whichever emotion was appropriate to the given audience. She demonstrated, quite clearly, an understanding of the period, and a realization that different words are appropriate for different audiences.

I can imagine such an exercise being used in a social studies class, possibly after the study of pioneer days. In the voice of a pioneer woman, the students could write to the family left behind in the old country. Group work might work well here. In groups of three, one student could write to the pioneer's mother; another to her sister; and the third to her children who are to join her later. The letters should convey the flavor of the period, her hardships, and any joy she is experiencing in her new adventures.

I can also see using this idea after reading Daniel Keyes' novel *Flowers for Algernon* (1959). The students could create inkblots on paper and then discuss the images evoked. The following writing activity could be done by pairs of students. First in the role of a psychologist, one student writes a letter explaining a patient's problems, strong points, etc., as drawn from the inkblots and interviews with the "patient." Then the other student assumes the role of patient and writes a response to the first letter. Patients must be certain to question what they do not understand and make whatever other comments they deem pertinent in such a letter.

I remember hearing the illustrator Jose Aruego remark that he answers all correspondence from children, that they enlighten him with their remarks, critical or complimentary. Other writers, too, make an effort to answer student correspondence, especially if the purpose of the letter is clearly defined. As an option to a book report, students might write the author concerning a particular book; they should be aware that they are corresponding with busy people, so they should have something definite to say. Whether they repond to passages they especially like, reveal their confusion about certain parts of the book, or merely share the ideas that have been prompted by the work, they will be practicing important writing skills. If students receive a reply, they will have gained an added reward for their efforts.

Letters can even be used in a science class. If the class conducts experiments, and the teacher is willing to scramble a little, it would be exciting for students to have pen pals with whom they would discuss their experiments. This process might be carried out with another class of the same teacher; however, I envision a class from another teacher within the school, or, better yet, at another school, providing the audience needed here. Rather than always writing a lab report for a notebook, students might have to call upon new skills if they were to describe their experiments precisely, in writing, to peers. These letters definitely should be mailed, and I would hope that the receiving students would then follow the directions given, reply in letters how successfully the experiments went for them, and send new experiments of their own.

Again in science, in current events, or in a number of other classes, students could select unusual events that have recently taken place as the stimulus for a letter-writing activity. For example, they might choose something new accomplished in space travel, a new athletic

record, a royal birth, or a record temperature Then they could write about that event in a letter to their future grandchildren, in hopes of giving them some understanding of themselves as thinking, feeling human beings, and of revealing, first-hand, events in their own young lives.

Vincent P. Norris, in his essay "Mendacious Messages from Madison Avenue," notes that one of the "most effective prods available to consumers is probably the letter-to-the-editor, which editors faithfully read as the best source of feedback about their readers' wishes" (1974, p. 76). Editors truly are interested in knowing what their readers like or dislike, and are willing to print, as Norris puts it, even "the most devastating letters about their publication's *non*-advertising content"(p.76). Norris' point is that consumers seldom write to criticize advertisements, which he believes deserve much criticism. We seldom write such letters, yet we teachers often approach logic in terms of advertising, commenting freely on the fallacies, the near-lies, the generalities, irrational appeal, the tricks that are used to sell products. Might not a letter critical of phony advertisement be a valid conclusion to a study of logic?

Another more traditional letter-to-the-editor could be developed through the following process: Students each write such letters on issues they feel strongly about. The next day they write a second letter on the same topic, trying this time to use language that is more objective and neutral. Then in groups, the class can compare these letters, deciding which of the pair is more effective. (The key here is to determine the purpose of each letter and to recognize that connotative language can be quite effecive in its place.)

Finally there is the telegram. There is a place for concise writing, and I find that having students write telegrams is valuable exercise. I usually divide this assignment into two parts. First, students each write a telegram announcing an unusual event, revealing an observation, or sending a reminder to someone. I alert students to the fact that each word costs money so succinctness is essential. Once they've completed their telegrams, I collect and redistribute them. Now students must expand the telegrams they receive into letters. We then read some of each, noting the weaknesses and strengths of these two types of correspondence.

There are innumerable other ways to use letter writing in the classroom; several more are appended here. I've often found that teachers are eager to adapt new ideas to suit themselves, and that after essayists and lecturers scratch the surface of an issue, their effect soon becomes felt. If only we can emphasize letter writing as a viable means of communication, maybe when our students become adults they will express themselves freely on paper.

Letters to Characters

Each student completes the personal data sheet with a fictitious character in mind. Unless you have just read some science fiction, you may want to caution them not to exaggerate too much. Next, collect and redistribute the sheets. Ask students to write letters to the "character" described on the sheets they received or to write a letter from that character

Personal Data Sheet

1. Name _____
2. Age _____ Sex _____ Marital Status _____ Children _____
3. Next of kin _____
4. Hometown _____
5. Brief description of hometown _____
6. Occupation _____
7. Height _____ Weight _____
8. Hobbies _____
9. Special skills/talents _____
10. Favorite pets _____
11. Description of best friend _____
12. Job experience _____
13. Educational background _____
14. Pet peeves _____
15. Any other information that might be noteworthy _____

(Adapted from Donna Walker, Altus High School)

Poetic Letters

Urge your students to express themselves through poetry. The following letter is a letter-poem I have used For letters from well-known poets, see Robert Penn Warren's (1976) "Letter from a Coward to a Hero" and "The Letter about Money, Love, or Other Comfort, If Any," or "A Letter from Li Po" by Conrad Aiken (1970).

Letter to Jane

Postponing our communication?
Not really. Life is doing
that for me.
Are these life-doings important
to you? Where shall I begin?
We began
with school, so shall I tell of that now?
I'm in a summer workshop
writing and
learning. My head spins past sleep time.
No. You'd say, "Why not relax
after school year?"

What else is of interest? The kids then—
Did Sharon like kindergarten?
The baby?
We've not even seen Sandra yet
I long to see you again.
Our Ben?
Oh yes, he's fun. Husky I think, but
Perry says, "He is just right"
Employment?
My jobs are working better these days.
At first teacher, then teacher
and wife, now
all three at once—teacher, wife, mother.
I've improved my juggling act.
And for you?

Since 1964 we've shared.
Were any really bad times,
our years?
I like to remember golfing
in the snow—our dads shaking
their heads—
napping intermittently during
those all night study vigils.
You married,
then coached me to join with Perry.
That happened nine years ago.

Now you play
softball, have mastered skiing, even
bought a place at Breckenridge.
And for me?

I read more than ever before, sew
less, like to needlepoint Ben's
art, and watch
him grow as he questions everything.

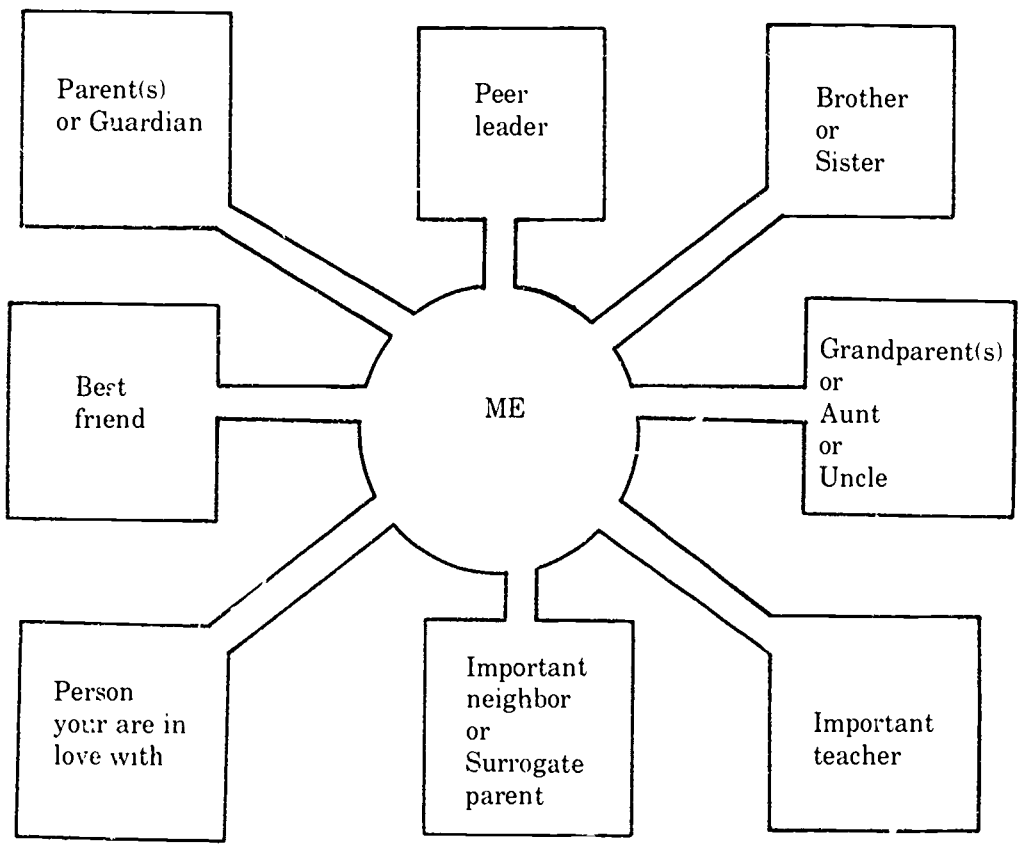
I've only begun to tap
What I want
to say. I wish you lived nearer.

Who Runs My Life?

Following a weekend or a short break, have students make two lists with these headings: "Things I wanted to do but didn't" and "Things I didn't want to do but did." After they've finished, have students each read one item from each list. Next ask the students why they did or did not do what they had wanted. Invariably they will answer "My mother wouldn't drive me" or "Dad said I couldn't go." It's easy to direct such comments to a discussion of influence.

Next have students write specific names in at least six of the blocks in the chart below, and then several things that each person demands, what they value for the student, what pressures they put on him or her. Students quickly see what they've felt for quite a while, that they are being pulled in many directions.

Then ask students to choose one person who influences or pressures them, to write a letter to that person, telling why they agree or disagree with that person's opinions, values and pressures. It's very important here to tailor the style of the letter to the recipient. Note: This activity should not be a gushy thank-you-for-loving-me letter. Rather, it should be a real examination of an important person in each student's life.



(For information about Current Values Realization materials and a schedule of nationwide training workshops, contact Sidney B. Simon, Old Mountain Road, Hadley, MA 01035.)

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An Untapped Writing Resource: Wordless Picture Books

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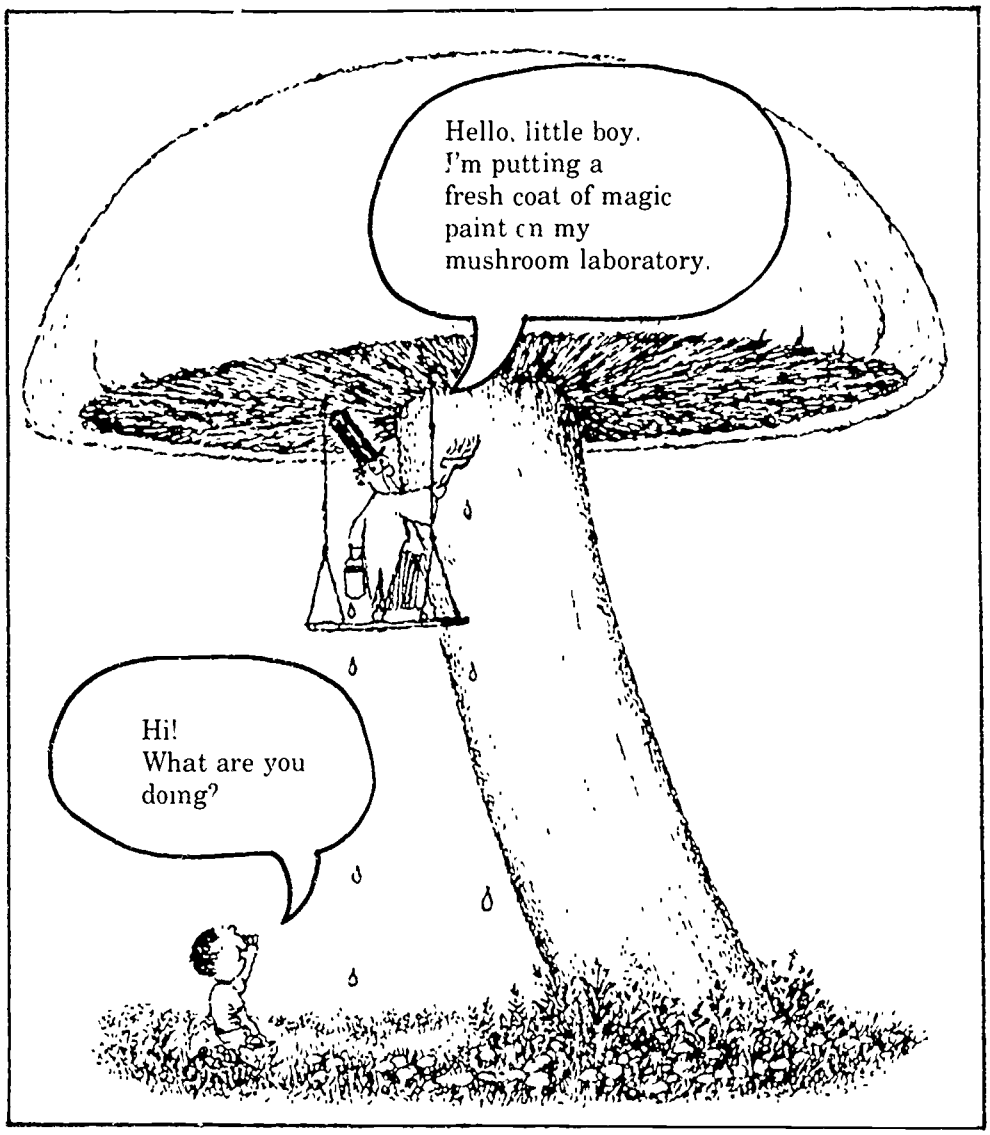
Wordless picture books are a common staple in kindergarten and first grade classrooms where teachers use them to stimulate young children's oral language skills and to teach reading readiness skills (D'Angelo, 1979; Degler, 1979). In wordless picture books, the story is told entirely through illustrations, and, as the name suggests, there are no words other than the title Because reading skills are not necessary, their use has been limited to beginning readers even though many wordless picture books appeal to middle school and high school students (McGee & Tompkins, 1983). The illustrations in many wordless picture books depict clever, entertaining tales, often presented on several levels of understanding which older students will appreciate more fully (e.g., Turkle's *Deep in the Forest*, 1976; Goodall's *Above and Below Stairs*, 1983).

These picture books without any words can also be used as a valuable resource for writers at all levels, kindergarten through high school. The most obvious writing activity is to have students compose stories to accompany the illustrations. Students can write their stories on strips of paper and clip the strips to the pages of the picture book. Later, classmates can read the "word-full" picture book. As an alternative, students can write their stories on sheets of paper or make their own story booklets. There are many other ways to use wordless picture books in the writing classroom, and ten possible uses are outlined below.

1. **Labeling**
Young children can write words on removable self-stick notes (try 3M scotch brand Post-it Note Pads available at office supply stores) or on strips of paper to label the picture on each page. Use Tana Hoban's concept books or other books such a *We Hide, You Seek* (Aruego, 1979), *Truck* (Crews, 1980), or *Elephant Buttons* (Ueno, 1973) which have uncomplicated illustrations. Other students may try labeling the pictures in a wordless book using only adjectives or another part of speech.

2. **Storytelling**
Students enjoy telling the story illustrated in the wordless picture book to a group of classmates. Older students may want to tell the stories to younger children. Also, ask students to tape record their stories and use the tapes in a listening center.

3. **Dialogue**
To add dialogue to a wordless picture book, cut out a set of talking balloons (the type used in cartoons) Then have children clip the balloons to each page of a wordless picture book and add dialogue to make a "word-full" book. Later students can rewrite the dialogue in the conventional manner.
For example: (See example on next page.)



(From Krahn, *Sebastian and the Mushroom*, Delacorte, 1976)

Dialogue Rewrites

Script form:

Little boy: Hi! What are you doing?
Magician. Hello, little boy. I'm putting a fresh coat of magic paint on my mushroom laboratory."

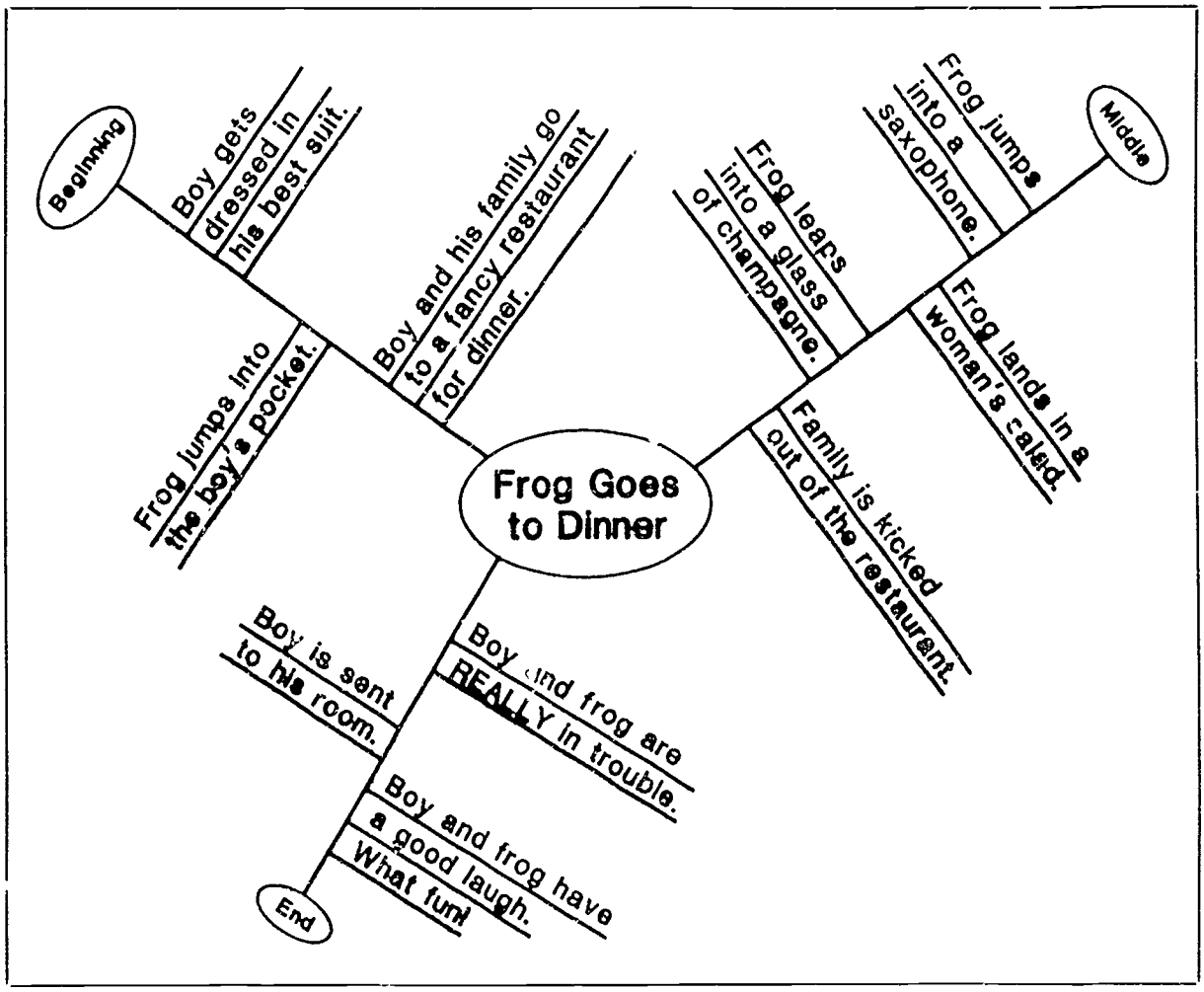
Narrative form:

The little boy said, "Hi! What are you doing?"
The magician answered, "Hello, little boy. I'm putting a fresh coat of magic paint on my mushroom laboratory."

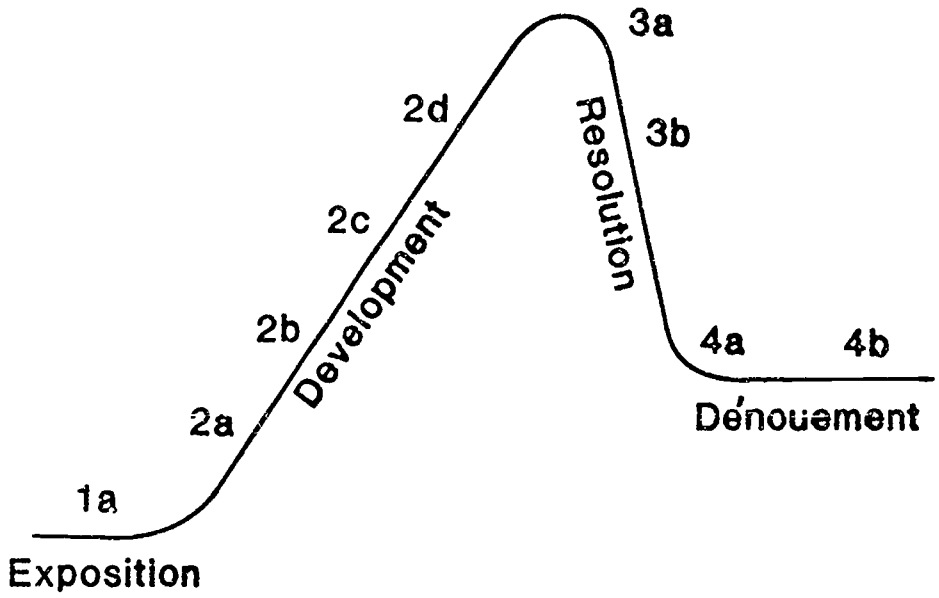
4. **Class Collaboration Story**
Choose a favorite wordless picture book and invite children to each select one page to draw a picture of and write several sentences about. Then compile the pages and make your own class edition of the book.

5. **Dramatics**
Invite students to role play the story of a wordless picture book or create puppets and present a puppet show based on one story. Older students might want to write a script to use in their dramatic activities. Remember, a composition can be oral, dramatic, or written!

6. **Mapping Stories**
Students can analyze the structure of wordless picture books just as they might the structure of any story. For example, younger children can web the beginning-middle-end of a story. Here is a web, developed for Mercer Mayer's hilarious story, *Frog Goes to Dinner* (1974):



And, older students can diagram the plot of a wordless picture book This diagram illustrated the plot of Winter's *The Bear and the Fly* (1976):



Exposition	1a	A fly flies in the window.
Development	2a	Father Bear swats at it, but he misses.
	2b	He swats again, hitting Mother Bear and knocking her out.
	2c	He swats a third time, hitting Baby Bear and knocking her out.
	2d	He swats a fourth time, hitting the dog and knocking it out.
Resolution	3a	He climbs on a chair on a table and again tries to swat the fly.
	3b	He misses the fly and falls off the chair on the table and is knocked out.
Denouement	4a	The house is a total mess and everyone is lying on the floor unconscious.
	4b	The fly flies merrily out the window.

7. **Composing without Words**
Have students illustrate their own wordless picture books. Encourage them to use different media for their books (e.g., styrofoam prints, collage, photos, watercolors, pen and ink). Also, students may create wordless versions of favorite stories with words.

8. **Sequence**
Purchase two copies of a paperback version of a wordless picture book with a strong storyline, and cut the pages apart. Back each page with construction paper, number the pages in order (put the numbers on the back) and laminate. Then ask students to sequence the pages and tell the story aloud. Students can also write sentences related to each picture on strips of paper for their classmates to sequence. For younger children, try dePaola's *Flicks* (1979) which includes five very short stories Older students will enjoy the challenge presented by Krahn's *The Secret in the Dungeon* (1983) as well as many of his other wordless stories.

9. **Questions**
Anno's delightful wordless picture books have objects hidden on each page. Students can write questions to attach to each page to direct their classmates' attention as they peruse the books. Elementary students wrote these questions for Anno's newest book, *Anno's U.S.A.* (1983):

> Can you find the totem pole hidden on this page?

> The Peanuts characters are somewhere on this page. Can you find them?

> Where are Betsy Ross, Ben Franklin, Uncle Sam, and Robert E. Lee? Look hard! They're all on this page.

10. **Point of view**
Ask children to write a story to accompany a wordless picture book from the viewpoints of various characters. For example, one student might tell Fernando Krahn's *The Great Ape* (1978) from the ape's point of view while another child could write from the little girl's viewpoint. Older students might try writing the story from the first person involved, first person removed, omniscient, and limited omniscient viewpoints. Later students can compare the versions and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each point of view.

These ten activities suggest a variety of ways to involve students with oral, dramatic, and written composition activities. In addition, many of the activities can be integrated with lessons on language skills (e.g., parts of speech, punctuation marks). It's time for kindergarten and first grade teachers to share these delightful wordless picture books with English/language arts teachers at all levels!

Wordless Picture Books

Alexander, BOBO'S DREAM (Dial, 1980)
Alexander, OUT! OUT! OUT! (Dial, 1968)
Amoss, BY THE SEA (Parents, 1969)
Anderson, THE PACKAGE (Bobbs, 1981)
Anno, ANNO'S ANIMALS (Collins, 1977)
Anno, ANNO'S ITALY (Collins, 1978)
Anno, ANNO'S JOURNEY (Collins, 1977)
Anno, ANNO'S U.S.A. (Philomel, 1983)
Anno, TOPSY-TURVIES (Weatherill, 1970)
Ardizzone, THE WRONG SIDE OF THE BED (Doubleday, 1980)
Aruego, LOOK WHAT I CAN DO (Scribner, 1971)
Aruego, WE HIDE, YOU SEEK (Greenwillow, 1979)
Asch, THE BLUE BALLOON (McGraw, 1971)
Asch, IN THE EYE OF THE TEDDY (Harper, 1973)
Barner, THE ELEPHANT'S VISIT (Little, Brown, 1975)
Barton, ELEPHANT (Seaburg, 1971)
Baum, BIRDS OF A FEATHER (Addison-Wesley, 1969)
Bollinger-Savelli, THE KNITTED CAT (Macmillan, 1981)
Briggs, THE SNOWMAN (Puffin, 1978)
Brinktoe, THE SPIDERWEB (Doubleday, 1974)
Cannon, A CAT HAD A FISH ABOUT A DREAM (Pantheon, 1976)
Carle, WILL YOU BE MY FRIEND? (Crowell, 1971)
Carrick, DRIP, DROP (Macmillan, 1973)

Carroll, THE CHIMP AND THE CLOWN (Walck, 1968)
Carroll, THE CHRISTMAS KITTEN (Walck, 1970)
Carroll, THE DOLPHIN AND THE MERMAID (Walck, 1974)
Carroll, ROLLING DOWNHILL (Walck, 1973)
Carroll, WHAT WHISKERS DID (Walck, 1965)
Carroll, THE WITCH KITTEN (Walck, 1973)
Crews, TRUCK (Greenwillow, 1980)
DePaola, FLICKS (HBJ, 1979)
DePaola, PANCAKES FOR BREAKFAST (HBJ, 1978)
DePaola, SING, PIERROT, SING (HBJ, 1983)
Elzbieta, LITTLE MOPS AND THE BUTTERFLY (Doubleday, 1974)
Espencheid, OH BALL (Harper, 1966)
Fromm, MUFFEL AND PLUMS (Macmillan, 1973)
Fuchs, JOURNEY TO THE MOON (Delacorte, 1969)
Giovanni, MAX (Atheneum, 1977)
Goodall, ABOVE AND BELOW STAIRS (Atheneum, 1983)
Goodall, THE ADVENTURES OF PADDY PORK (HBJ, 1968)
Goodall, THE BALLOONING ADVENTURES OF PADDY PORK (HBJ, 1969)
Goodall, CREEPY CASTLE (Atheneum, 1975)
Goodall, AN EDWARDIAN SUMMER (Atheneum, 1973)
Goodall, JACKO (HBJ, 1971)
Goodall, NAUGHTY NANCY (Atheneum, 1975)
Goodall, PADDY'S EVENING OUT (Atheneum, 1973)
Goodall, PADDY'S NEW HAT (Atheneum, 1980)
Goodall, PADDY PORK'S HOLIDAY (Atheneum, 1974)
Goodall, SHREWBETTINA'S BIRTHDAY (Crowell, 1971)
Goodall, THE SURPRISE PICNIC (Atheneum, 1974)
Goodall, THE STORY OF AN ENGLISH VILLAGE (Atheneum, 1979)
Hamburger, THE LAZY DOG (Four Winds, 1971)
Hamburger, A SLEEPLESS DAY (Four Winds, 1973)
Heller, LILY AT THE TABLE (Macmillan, 1979)
Henstra, MIGHTY MIZZLING MOUSE (Lippincott, 1983)
Hoban, CIRCLES, TRIANGLES, AND SQUARES (Macmillan, 1974)
Hoban, IS IT RED? IS IT YELLOW? (Greenwillow, 1978)
Hoban, OVER, UNDER AND THROUGH (Macmillan, 1973)
Hoban, PUSH-PULL, EMPTY-FULL (Macmillan, 1972)
Hoban, SHAPES AND THINGS (Macmillan, 1970)
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Comics: A Truly Serious Business

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Comics in the classroom? Who needs them? Who has time for them with this back-to-basics push? Almost any creative teacher who searches for innovative ways to teach even the very basics certainly can take advantage of this unique kind of reading material with its universal appeal. Comics actually enjoy a higher readership than any part of the paper with the exception of the headlines. BLONDIE, for example, appears in 1200 newspapers daily. Part of this willing audience, of course, is children, elementary and secondary school students. Children and adults identify with comic strip characters and their actions. Who wouldn't like to have Lucy's confidence in every situation? Who hasn't felt Linus' insecurity and at least once wanted to hide behind that trusty blanket? Who hasn't had at least one football jerked away just at an inopportune moment? Perhaps the "I feel dumb all the time just like Beetle Bailey" or the "I need some of Mrs. Worth's advice" is the universal appeal of these strips. Whatever it is, teachers should recognize it and use these strips to teach, teach, teach!

Each of these strips contains a gold mine of opportunities for teaching about life, about humor, about psychology, about communication. They can help teach vocabulary, characterization, clichés, comparison, title writing, grammar, irony, punctuation, etc. The truly scrutinizing teacher will not miss an opportunity to use such easily accessible and readily acceptable materials, for comics can be used to motivate even the most reluctant students to work. These comics are easily reproducible, too. The following are some possibilities for using comics in the classroom.

1. To Begin School

A collection of comics relating to school and its problems can be used to make an interesting bulletin board display, one that will earn students' attention immediately and one to which students can perhaps contribute.

2. To Find Misspelled Words

Some misspelled words appear in almost every set of comics. TUMBLEWEEDS is notorious for such misspellings. Students could identify the wrong words and spell them correctly. Spelling lessons could even come from the comics page.

3. To Learn Parts of Speech

To reinforce knowledge of parts of speech, students can be asked to list ten or twenty nouns, and/or pronouns from a page of strips. They could be asked to identify the kind of noun, such as common or proper, concrete or abstract, or the kind of pronoun, such as personal or its case or number

4. To Identify Subject-Verb Relationships

All subjects and verbs on the comic page could be identified or even diagrammed. Nouns could be identified as singular or plural, and verbs could be identified by tense or as regular or irregular.

5. **To Find Fragments**
Fragments abound in comics as do run-on structures. Fragments could be identified and a note made of the missing element which is usually the subject, verb, or both. They can then be corrected by supplying the missing ingredient

6. **To Note Compound Parts**
In one box of a HAGAR strip, Hagar's wife Helga uses a compound verb that contains six verbs. Each verb contains a direct object and at least one modifier. Students can be asked to identify all compound parts on the page.

7. **To Identify Kinds of Sentences**
Identifying simple, compound, and complex sentences from a comic page can be used to show students that "real" writers do use such devices. Students can also be asked to identify and imitate declarative, imperative, interrogative, and exclamatory sentences from the strips.

8. **To Find Contractions**
After studying contractions, elementary students could be asked to locate and copy all contractions from a day's strips. They could also be asked to write the two words for which each contraction stands. At least ten to twenty contractions can usually be found on any full-page set of comics.

9. **To Punctuate Direct Address**
This element is one of the most prominent in a set of strips. Direct address is often moved around so that the teacher can point out to students punctuation differences when it appears at the beginning, end, or in the middle of a sentence.

10. **To Teach or Reinforce Infinitives**
One daily paper selected at random contained fifteen infinitives (e.g., "to impersonate," "to strangle"). Students could be asked to locate them, decide how they are used (e.g., noun, adjective, adverb), or diagram them.

11. **To Teach Sequence**
Since sequence is an important writing and reading skill, a strip can be cut apart to be put together by students. The age of the students determines how difficult to make this job. Older students can even handle strips with very few words. Such an activity helps students learn to predict what is about to occur based on clues found earlier which can be discussed as a form of foreshadowing.

12. **To Show Alliteration**
TUMBLEWEEDS' writer, T. K Ryan, seems to enjoy writing alliteration. Every so often the Chief in this strip utters a whole sentence of delightful alliteration about his tribe. A collection of these and other alliterations will delight any poetry class.

13. **To Find Generalizations and Specifics**
Teachers can write generalizations, such as "Many comic characters have distinguishing marks or characteristics." Students can then be asked to supply specifics to support this generalization. A specific might be, "Henry has one single curl on the top of his seemingly quite bald head."

14. **To Teach Humor**
After the class has read several comics together, types of humor (e.g., slapstick, wit, irony, satire, sight jokes, puns) can be discussed, pointing out specific examples from the strips just read.

15. **To Note Relationships**
Numerous kinds of relationships abound in the strips. Blondie and Dagwood, Lucy and Charlie Brown, Dennis and Mr. Wilson. A writing assignment discussing the differences and/or likenesses could be assigned. Perhaps students have witnessed or been a part of a similar true-to-life relationship which they could write about.

16. **To Do Title Practice**
After some discussion about what makes good titles, some single comics or short strips can be flashed on the screen with an opaque or overhead. (Comics generally make clear overheads to keep for next time!) Working in groups of three, students can be asked to try to write at least two different titles for each cartoon. Then they can exchange papers and have classmates underline which of the two titles they like best. After each paper is seen by several students, discussion can ensue again about what makes titles appealing.

Comics are not, of course, the answer to all of a teacher's woes, but they can certainly be used to enhance almost any subject area, particularly the language arts. They can change the pace in a classroom and add spice to a sometimes too serious subject. Students may be surprised that their teacher reads and enjoys the comics too. They will perhaps be pleased that their teacher can be so innovative. In the use of comics in the clasroom, a teacher is limited only by imagination!

Developing Critical Skills through Writing, Reading, and Thinking

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When both the Cambridge report and the national report on "Excellence in Education" found that American students lacked critical thinking and writing skills, I had to agree. When told to write on a film, poem, or short story, my students would write, "I really liked this story; the plot was exciting." or "This story was hard to read. Why did the writer have to use so many words?" When Susie with her A average wanted to guarantee her grade, she would say not only that the poem was about a lovely dark woman but that it was a quatrain, with an *abba* rhyme scheme, a simile in the third line, and an iambic pentameter rhythm.

None of the responses reflected any reasoning on the part of my students. Critical reasoning involves a great deal more than memorizing the "seven steps to clear thinking" or being able to identify something as inductive, deductive, or analogy. Knowing when a comparison is strong, when a conclusion is based on solid evidence, or being able to draw inferences which are logical is as hard for the teacher to teach as it is for the students to learn Critical analysis is an area which frightens many of us; I'm not sure whether it's because of the word itself or whether it's because it deals with interpretation, and, therefore, has no absolute right or wrong answers. It is one element of education which needs to be emphasized from the earliest grades on, but I find my twelfth graders either don't have the critical skills, or they are so unsure of their ability to reason, they will not share their ideas with the rest of the class. I soon realized that before my students could write critically about a selection, they had to be taught to read critically.

That meant teaching them to do "close" reading. Close is not just an awareness of what is being said but of how and why it is being said that way. To read close is not just the speed at which one reads but the constant questioning attitude: Why is a character named Simon? Why does the story take place at night? Why did the author choose to rhyme his poem? What might this box represent?

Such reading seems to be the opposite of speed reading which my students feel would be a highly desirable skill, and before they will try close reading, I have to show them that some of their ideas about reading and writing are wrong. First, writing may not mean what it appears to say. Second, writing may have multiple meanings. Third, I do not know the *right* answer. And fourth, writers structure their writing, it does not just flow from inspiration, and there is reason for each detail in the structure. Now, I'm sure the students have been told these facts many times, but until they discover them for themselves, they will continue to read on a surface level, insist that's "what it says," and want a "correct" answer to memorize for the next test. The best way, I've found, to prove the possibilities of critical reading is to walk them through a few short poems.

My favorite beginning poem is one I read years ago in *English Journal*. I have no idea when or who the author was, but the poem is:

At midnight
tears
run in my ears.

The students' first reaction to the poem is, "That's a big joke." It's short, simple, and easy to understand. I generally have them do three different things with it. First, I ask them to make two columns, one for facts and the second for inferences, and list four or five statements about the poem and four or five truths which are not actually stated. The speaker is lying down. The speaker is on his/her back, etc. For each inference, students must give reasons for believing the inference is true. Some of the students will infer sex, age, and possible future action Second, by covering the last line, the students notice how mood changes between the second and third line. Third, they write their idea of the meaning. The most popular answer is, "Tears don't solve problems." but other include. "Self-pity doesn't hurt anyone but the one feeling sorry for himself." or "There's a time to act, not to feel." Whatever the idea, the students have done critical, evaluative thinking, and they see it is possible to have several different ideas about one selection, and all can be right.

Once we begin, I place a different short poem on the board two to three times a week, and we spend ten to fifteen minutes talking about key words or unusual structures. Then the students write briefly. A nursery thyme tossed in once in awhile is fun. I stay with short, modern poems rather than Shakespeare or Donne, not so much because of complexity of thoughts as the language problem. A "whereas," "hath," or "thou," and a reverse sentence will defeat average students before they even get started. Later in the year, we can work with longer, more complex selections.

Once the students begin to work with poetry or prose, they will need some basic information. They should know the most common symbols and themes that writers use. Symbols are meaningless unless students know what they are looking for. If an object is mentioned several times in a story, students need to be alert to its significance. I ask students to list all the most common symbol/object pairs they know; to add others to their lists; and to discuss possible meanings. When there is doubt about such terms as sunrise, sunset, east, west, sea, river, etc., I help them develop a pool of common symbols to work from. In the same way, they can learn the most common themes. By listing different stories, movies, plays, and novels, and then classifying them according to possible themes (e.g., loss of innocence, growing up, good vs. evil), they will begin to have background to work from.

When teaching possible themes in a short story we'll take a story such as "Araby." One student summarizes the plot, and then we list all the items in the story which do not apply to plot. Their job is to develop one idea which ties all those items together. An alternative exercise is to have the students choose the one sentence in the story which they feel best expresses the theme and tell why they chose that sentence.

Before writing about a story, students need to be challenged with a few interpretative questions. Not "What happened" or "Who came to the house?" but "Why is the main character a 13-year-old boy?" or "Why did Jack return to the giant the third time?" Don't be afraid to ask questions that you, the teacher, don't have an answer. Students like to see their teacher struggle with an idea or phrase. It's a gamble, but the price is worth it. I'm amazed at how often a student picks up on something I missed entirely. This year, I found a short poem about an old house that ended with the words, empty vase. I couldn't see the connection until a quiet little girl, sitting in the back row of the third hour class said, "But the vase once held live flowers just as the house once held live people." The students turned toward her, she glowed, and I could have hugged her.

Once we have had a few questions or a brief discussion, I give the students a few sentences from the selection. They may choose any one that I listed, or one of their own choice from the story, and then they write approximately 20 minutes, reflecting and elaborating on the

sentence. Through close reading, interpretative questions, and then writing, the students have a pool of information from which to pull, they have listened to enough different opinions so that they can form their own, and they have a limited, focused topic to explore.

The steps, then, that I find essential in integrating critical thinking into writing are:

1. Make sure the students are aware that "there is gold in them there hills." Read close with them, but let them find the nuggets.
2. Teach literary terminology. While knowledge of terms is useful in communicating, students don't have to know the term apostrophe, for example, in order to understand that the speaker is addressing an object. Do not accept knowledge of techniques as a substitute for critical thinking.
3. Provide information (e.g., knowledge of symbols, themes; the importance of rhyme, of word position, of contrast) to give students the confidence they need to draw inferences.
4. Allow time for writing and for sharing their responses. Keep the preliminary discussion brief for students will simply restate in writing what they have already said if the selection is talked to death.
5. Be sure students have a focus for their writing—a word, phrase, or sentence. Then they can pull different experiences and characters into the common idea.

The writing which comes from this activity cannot be called critical in that it does not assess the value of the selection nor is it critical in analyzing the author's techniques. Rather, the term critical applies only to the reasoning that goes on within the student. The story, poem, picture, or film serves as a way to trigger or direct thinking. My students may not go on to college, but I want them to have the inquiring attitude when they work, when they pick up the evening newspaper, and when they watch the six o'clock news, and I want them to be aware of the possibility of multiple solutions.

Most of my students do not have a solid enough reading background to honestly evaluate the quality of a selection and they see little or no relevance for their lives in analyzing techniques. But when students can take an idea (e.g., bunburying), examine it in context of their experience or prejudice, explore possibilities, and develop them in ways they never considered before, their twenty-minute essays may not be critical writing, but they are critical thinking and rewarding to both teacher and students.

Student Writing

Sentence: "Bunbury is perfectly invaluable" from *Importance of Being Earnest*

> Oh! He has been talking about Bunburying has he? It's one of American's most polished skills. Everyone has done some kind of Bunburying in order to escape an unpleasant, boring or strenuous task.
>
> Bunburyists vary in degrees from the novice to the expert. Novice bunburyists usually start slow and build up their programs: "Mom's yelling at me to get off the phone!" "I've got to go to the bathroom." and "Dad's expecting a call." are all phrases in the beginning bunburyist's vocabulary.
>
> These phrases are highly acceptable and can be used in a variety of situations—when you meet someone in the store (Dad is waiting in the car, etc.), when the next door neighbor gets you over the fence (I think I hear the phone.) All beginning bunburying remarks can be enlarged to the intermediate and expert level.

The transition between novice and intermediate bunburying is easy to make. After only a few simple bunburying remarks, the novice is ready to advance. Intermediate Bunburyists use more complex excuses and often use other objects to make their excuses convincing. "I can't come over now, my car is not running." "I've got a committee meeting in ten minutes." "I'm going to grandmother's this weekend." are a few intermediate bunburying comments. These can get a Bunburyist out of all kinds of tasks that would spoil a weekend.

The expert Bunburyist is a formidable person indeed. When Bunburyist reaches this level, almost nothing will force him to do anything he does not wish to do. Expert bunburying is a goal to which all Americans aspire.

Terri H.

Sentence: "Impossible things should not be tried at all" from *Antigone*

I do not agree with that statement. In the story "The Destructors" when T. said they were going to tear down Mr. Thomas' house, one of the little boys said that it was impossible. But they accomplished it anyway.

A lot of things in life may seem impossible, but nothing can be impossible unless you have tried it and failed. Like the old saying, "Try, try, try again." One thing in my life that I have tried to do that I thought was impossible was to roller skate. When I first got out there, all I did was fall down. But after a while it became easier and before I knew it, I could skate without falling down. So that shows you that some things you think are impossible become easier once you try it.

Susan S.

Ineffable

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The declining ACT and SAT scores of graduating seniors and the publication of *A Nation at Risk* can no longer be ignored. We must graduate literate college-bound as well as college students. The findings of a 1983 national study on education by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, published in the August 29, 1984, issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, are twofold: that "the mastery of English is the first and most essential goal of education" and that "writing is the most important and neglected skill in school." Furthermore, the Carnegie study advises that "writing should be taught in every class."

The English teacher's job is clear. We must require more writing. However, most high school and college students view the required English composition classes as a plague they must survive in order to graduate. It is imperative, then, that the English teacher provide an exciting and challenging assignment for the first theme to be written each fall. The rationale is if the first theme is successful, students will be less reluctant to write others.

One method of finding a subject works well for me. using literature as a springboard for writing The following steps explain the process.

1. Assign a provocative essay or short story to be read by the class, such as "The Jigsaw Man" by Larry Niven, "The Veldt" by Ray Bradbury, "The Portable Phonograph" by Walter Van Tilburg Clark, "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson, "By the Waters of Babylon" by Stephen Vincent Benet, "Tomorrow, Tomorrow, Tomorrow" by Kurt Vonnegut, "The Bargain" by A. B. Guthrie, "And There Will Come Soft Rains" by Bradbury.

2. Discuss the story thoroughly after everyone has read it. Then ask students to write ten sentences that are relevant in some way to the reading assignment The sentences may be quotes, but students' reactions to the story work better.

3. Ask students to circle five of their ten sentences (the five they like the best or can write the most about) and write a paragraph for each of the five circled sentences.

4. Hand out sample paragraphs and ask students to label the topic sentence (TS), the primary sentences (PS), the secondary sentences (SS), and the concluding sentence (CS). The following paragraph is an example

(TS)Although people are basically alike, no matter where they live, I have found some differences between the natives of Italy and the natives of Oklahoma. (PS)The first major difference is attitude. (SS)Most Oklahomans worry about everything and rush here and there, developing ulcers and suffering early heart attacks as they push themselves to achieve, to work, to succeed. (SS)The Romans' philosophy, on the other hand. is "not to worry, not to worry." (SS)While Oklahomans drink pots of coffee to stay awake through a long day's work, Roman citizens close their shops during the heat of the day for a siesta, not worrying about the business they may be losing. (PS)The most noticeable difference is the reactions of the two to stressful situations. (SS)Most Oklahomans remain outwardly calm and speak in a controlled voice when they are angry, no matter how much they would like to scream, curse, or cry; but

the average Italian shouts obscenities and waves his hands until he is no longer upset. (SS)Then he shrugs his shoulders and forgets the incident. (CS)Perhaps we Oklahomans could prevent some expensive medical bills if we adopted the Romans' philosophy.

5. Ask students to label the sentences in their own five paragraphs with TS, PS, SS, CS. The teacher should circulate around the classroom to help those who are having trouble identifying their sentences.

6. After students have labeled all the sentences in their paragraphs, ask them to choose one paragraph to work with.

7. Hand out a sample paragraph (or use the overhead projector) to show how to make an outline from a paragraph. The following paragraph was written by one of my students, Leon Beall.

Science has made great advances in the twentieth century. Lake Erie is dying a premature death by eutrophication created by too much raw sewage and phosphates. Offshore oil spills are damaging beaches, killing wildlife, and ruining fishing along the coastal areas of the United States. France, and England. Beaches are closed for swimming in New York, Virginia, California, Japan, and Europe because of industrial wastes and sewage. Fishing is banned in the Potomac River, the Thames River, and in Japan because of mercury pollution. People are picketing the landing of the SST in New York because of the noise. Others are protesting the use of fluorocarbons in pressurized aerosol cans because of the possible damage that can be done to the ozone layer in the atmosphere. Overcrowding in the cities is severe, resulting in overcrowding and death on the highways as people rush to overcrowded parks and recreation areas. Exhaust fumes are destroying the lungs of urban dwellers worldwide, killing 5000-year-old bristle cone pines in California and damaging hundreds-of-years-old marble statues in Europe. Nuclear generating plants are feared because of possible contamination or explosions that could injure or kill many people. Nuclear proliferation is a threat to the safety of most if not all people on earth. Scientific advancement is not always progress.

8. Most students will readily see that the last sentence of the above paragraph is the topic sentence. From there it becomes easy to find the five advances in science which are causing problems. Write the outline on the chalkboard as students dictate the main topics. The following is an example of a sentence outline:

Thesis: Scientific advancement is not always progress.

I. Advances in science have created water pollution.
II. Advances in science have caused severe noise pollution.
III. Advances in science have brought about air pollution.
IV. Advances in science have developed overpopulation.
V. Advances in science have made radiation pollution.

9. Discuss with students the requirements for a theme introduction, body, and conclusion. Ask them if they could write a theme using the outline in point eight, writing at least one paragraph for each of the five main topics, plus an introductory and a concluding paragraph. Then hand out the following theme or one that you prefer to use.

Ineffable

The industrial revolution beginning in England in the mid 1700's spurred the economic and intellectual growth of western European civilization. With increasing speed new knowledge became known, creating tremendous growth in scientific and industrial communities This cycle of growth in knowledge fed upon itself. A result was an increasingly rapid change and advancement in living style in the nations of the Atlantic community. As science and commerce marched hand-in-hand, optimism expressed the mood of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. This great growth of knowledge culminated in 1945 with the explosion of the world's first atomic bomb over the deserts of New Mexico. According to Dr. Edward Teller, sometimes called the father of the atomic age, the progress of the past century may be in a downward spiral, leading man not forward to a golden age but rather backwards toward destruction. It may be that scientific advancement has opened Pandora's box for modern man.

In the 1970's science laid its golden egg. Oil spills occur with increasing frequency. The pristine beaches of Dover are devastated by the grounding of the tanker *Torrey Canyon*, affecting adversely the fishing and bird life of the area. The sandy beaches of Brittany are brutalized by the breakup of the tanker *Cadiz*. The popular California beaches along the Santa Barbara Channel are blackened by crude oil from accidents with offshore wells. Lake Erie is dying a premature death by eutrophication caused by excessive amounts of raw sewage and phosphates being dumped into its waters. Beaches are closed for swimming in New York, Ohio, Louisiana, and Texas because industrial wastes and sewage have polluted the water. The Hudson River is the largest flush sewer system in the United States, receiving not only great amounts of raw sewage but also poisonous industrial chemical wastes created by a burgeoning demand for laboratory produced substitutes for natural products. The Potomac River, closed for fishing and swimming, is a gray, turgid stream assaulting eyes and nostrils and hiding the insidious poison mercury in the bottom silt.

The waters of the nation are not the only spoiled area. SST's, landing at Kennedy International Airport, are picketed because of the noise level surrounding the airport. Trucks and automobiles on the highways and expressways in urban and rural areas are adding to the noise discomfort and are creating ribbons of racket bisecting the nation. Disco and hard rock music is pounding the ears of the young, deafening them as they gyrate to the crashing beat of music that eliminates sensitivity to all sound except that which is so cacophonous it cannot be ignored.

Inside, sound destroys the hearing; outside, air pollution saps the vitality of people. Exhaust fumes from cars, trucks, and factories are blackening the lungs of urban dwellers, killing 5000-year-old bristle cone pines in the Sierras near Los Angeles, and damaging marble statues in Athens, Florence, Venice, and Rome. Fluorocarbon from pressurized aerosol cans is attacking the protective ozone shield in the atmosphere. The flesh and soul of a race are being destroyed by their own mechanical monsters.

Perhaps one of the most recognizable problems is overpopulation. Overcrowding in the cities is severe, the result of a technology eliminating the need for a large rural work force. The result is overcrowding and death on the highways as people flee from their incarceration in the cities to equally overcrowded parks and recreation areas

But the most insidious and most feared form of pollution, being invisible and undetectable without measuring devices, is radiation. Color TV's, smoke and microwave ovens are emitting low levels of radiation. In the uranium mining areas of Colorado and New Mexico, miners are suffering premature, agonizing deaths from increased cancer rates attributed to radiation. Nuclear generating plants are feared because of possible contamination or ex-

plosions that could affect great numbers of people. Nuclear proliferation and its concomitant possibility of triggering a devastating nuclear war is a threat to the safety of most if not all people on earth.

It has been said that there are only two types of people—those going somewhere and those going nowhere. Like people, any society, whether molded by technology or guided by other philosophies, needs purpose and direction, else it will flounder and fail. Unfortunately, the various scientific disciplines, acting like the many headed Hydra, have during the past decades pulled this nation first one way and then another. If this nation and this planet are to survive long, then technological advancement must be accompanied by real progress in environmental awareness.

10. Many good principles of writing are exhibited in the theme "Ineffable":
    a. The introductory paragraph starts out with broad background material and zeroes in on the topic of this theme at the end of the paragraph. This paragraph is not the typical one-sentence introduction that I often get from my students' first theme.
    b. This student has a superior vocabulary and has obviously used both a thesaurus and a dictionary as he wrote.
    c. Transitional devices are used between paragraphs, such as repetition of key words and lead-in words ("The waters of the nation are not the only spoiled area . . ." and "Inside, sound destroys the hearing; outside, air pollution saps the vitality of the people."), transitions ("But the most insidious . . ."), and repetition of key words for emphasis ("overcrowding overcrowded").
    d. This student has given many specific examples for each main topic.
    e. He has used poetic devices in his writing, such as the alliteration in paragraph two (" . . . beaches of Brittany are brutalized by the breakup . . . ") and in paragraph three ("ribbons of racket").
    f. He has used vivid verbs, such as "science *laid* its golden egg," "beaches *are brutalized,*" "SST's *are picketed,*" "as they *gyrate,*" "air pollution *saps,*" and "as people *flee.*"
    g. His adjectives are well chosen and not overdone. pristine beaches, cacophonous, mechanical, insidious, premature, agonizing.
11. Ask students to make an outline from the paragraph they chose in point six.
12. After the outlines are approved, students write their themes.
13. Variation: One outline could be made by the entire class from the reading assignment. Then with the class divided into groups, they could write a group theme. One group would write on topic one, another group on topic two, etc. The introductory and concluding paragraphs could be written by each student after the body paragraphs are corrected for verb tense, person, transitions, and errors.

Stressing the Discovery Process in Teaching the Term Paper

Peggy J. Price
Duncan High School

My most challenging, rewarding, and frustrating teaching is done each spring when my seniors begin their term papers. Their struggle to meet its exacting demands is matched only by their eagerness to tackle this new task. Because it has not been taught as such before, I have the opportunity to explore an area and to teach a skill heretofore untouched. While the library study and the techniques for making correct bibliography and note cards leave little opportunity for creativity, when my seniors begin to write, I move out of the way and let the students discover what they have to say about their subjects.

Returning to the classroom after several days in the library, students have approximately enough note cards for their papers. I ask that the desks be cleared and that the writers divide their notecards into five stacks by combining and/or dividing topics, the major areas covered in their reading. Of course, five is a totally arbitrary number to get the activity under way. After a few minutes, I agree that the grouping depends on the subject and the writer and that some cards have to be grouped under "miscellaneous." For everyone, this is a time for brainstorming. Whether in small groups, with a close friend or teacher, or independently, writers examine their options: They take inventory of all that they have learned about their subjects. When the decisions are finally made, hopefully, each stack, or topic, will contain approximately the same number of cards thus indicating a well-balanced coverage of the subject. In some cases, however, this sorting points up the need for students to return to the library for additional material. In other cases, it requires the elimination of one or more topics. Nevertheless, the students begin to think of the ideas that are available and of the gaping holes that they have to fill.

My next activity is for students to each write three questions about their subjects that it will take all their cards to answer. I decided on three questions because one or two did not require a thorough examination of the material, and more than three questions became repetitious. This activity takes several minutes and provides substance for the next task, combining all three questions into one.

Combining the three questions into one offends some students. Certainly, some sentences are long and rambling. I assure my writers that we have plenty of time to polish our sentence structures after we have ideas sufficient to warrant the effort. It is the content, what the writer has to say, that must be the focal activity in this early stage of the writing process. To worry about the sound of the sentence or punctuation and spelling during this period distracts writers from chasing ideas and severely limits what they have to say.

The final activity for this day is a restructuring of that all inclusive question into a declarative sentence. This step-by-step discovery process thrusts the writer's thinking well on the way to a thesis statement. In fact, during this class period, students classify their material into workable topics that reflect their thinking on their subjects and identify an overall blueprint for their paper.

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Following this working day in the classroom, I give a writing assignment. ten handwritten pages due three class periods later. In response to "Where do I start?" I suggest that they pick up one stack of cards, read each one, and write what is on the cards, what they remember from the reading, and their opinions, assumptions, and conclusions drawn from their overall understanding of their subjects. This is a freewriting experience where the writers let their words flow without editing. There is no right or wrong, only the unrestricted chasing of ideas. Quantity is the goal, for students cannot improve what they have not written.

When students arrive with their first drafts, I ask them to prepare evaluation forms for two of their classmates to use in reinforcing what is good in their papers. To understand what they have written and to inform their classmates about their thinking, writers must identify their subjects, tell how they plan to limit their subjects, and indicate their attitudes toward what they have read. With this information at the top of each evaluation paper, each group of three follows the same procedure: Students take turns reading their papers a second time, and this time the listeners indicate on their evaluation forms the words, phrases, and ideas that most impress, interest, and challenge their imaginations. Writers then have two opinions pointing out areas where they have done well. This reinforcement works to encourage the students to continue their efforts to improve other areas.

Reinforced with success from complimentary comments, students then begin the first revision of their compositions. They have quantity from their first drafts, and they have constructive opinions of their ideas; their goal now is to re-examine the major areas of their papers and decide whether or not they support the overall plan. This is the time to evaluate their thesis statements and identify the relationship that exists between it and the body paragraphs

After the students have written a second draft, I ask them to make a sentence outline. The sentence outline offers numerous advantages since it identifies topic sentences and thus points out problems in unity and emphasis. When students find that a paragraph is out of place in their papers, I suggest that they cut the paragraphs apart and tape them together in the most appropriate sequence. Not asking my students to do extra copying that can be avoided offers encouragement and directs their efforts to more productive activities. As part of the outline activity, I also ask that they identify their overall method of development for their papers (e.g., analysis, comparison, cause and effect, etc.). Their method of development may not be clearly one or the other; however, the mental gymnastics required in making a decision seem to help students see their material clearer and discover the structure or form that will best present their ideas.

Moving from the fluency stage into the form stage, I ask that they add an introduction and conclusion: the introduction moving from a generalization to the thesis statement, the conclusion moving from the thesis statement to a generalization. I also ask that the topic sentence in each body paragraph be underlined. Here again, I pause for two or three class periods. Some students choose to make a third draft; others simply add to their present copy. Those writers who do make a third draft often do so because they want to solve the problem of too many short paragraphs. This is the time, the form stage in the term paper process, to develop unity and emphasis.

With a good rough draft in hand, we are ready to examine the sentence structures in the students' papers. Participles, appositives, dependent clauses, and nominative absolutes make all writing better. I now ask that they review sentence-combining and demonstrate their understanding by trying to improve one sentence in each body paragraph.

Next, I emphasize coherence by reviewing transitional devices and by showing how conjunctive adverbs, pronouns, and the repetition of words and ideas give a paper smoothness. Finally, after a class period where we discuss the fact that good titles develop unity by relating to the thesis statement, force by containing an action verb, and brevity by being only four, five, or six words in length, we are ready for step three, proofreading.

At this point freedom is again restricted and grammar books, thesauri, dictionaries, and typing manuals take over. Consequently, it was at this time that I asked my students to evaluate this experience: Did the discovery approach in writing a term paper aid in the development of the bodies of their papers? Here are some of the responses:

Steve: Every time I wrote my paper over, different ideas and even better words to fit the subject filled my mind.

Patricia: At first, I didn't worry about being right; therefore I didn't lose any ideas.

Cindy: I liked the group of three because reading my paper aloud I became more in touch with it myself and having constructive criticism made me feel better about my paper.

Scott: I liked the way we went about finding the thesis statement. If I had known I was doing a thesis statement, it would have been much harder.

Writing the rough draft before doing an outline was good because we could set up the paper anyway we felt would sound right. We weren't limited.

DeLayne: I have enjoyed the class participation—hearing the good points of my paper instead of the bad.

Andy: I think it was the outline, coming in the sequence that it did, that composed the form of the term paper.

John: The lesson on sentence-combining helped most of all because I was able to shorten my paper one and one-half pages. This made for more interesting reading and actually I was able to say more in a smaller space.

Loren: I liked the way the outline was presented after the rough draft because after writing my paper once, I did have some ideas clicking in my head.

Lynn: I sat down and just wrote information in my first copy. It wasn't until I did that, that I was able to start seeing what I could do.

I was well pleased with the experience. My students had a better grasp of their subjects, had less difficulty finding a thesis statement, and felt more secure in their search for a way to tell a reader about what they had learned. Teaching term papers this year was more interesting and profitable.

Sentence-Combining for Fun and Profit

Joan Harper
Yukon High Schoo!

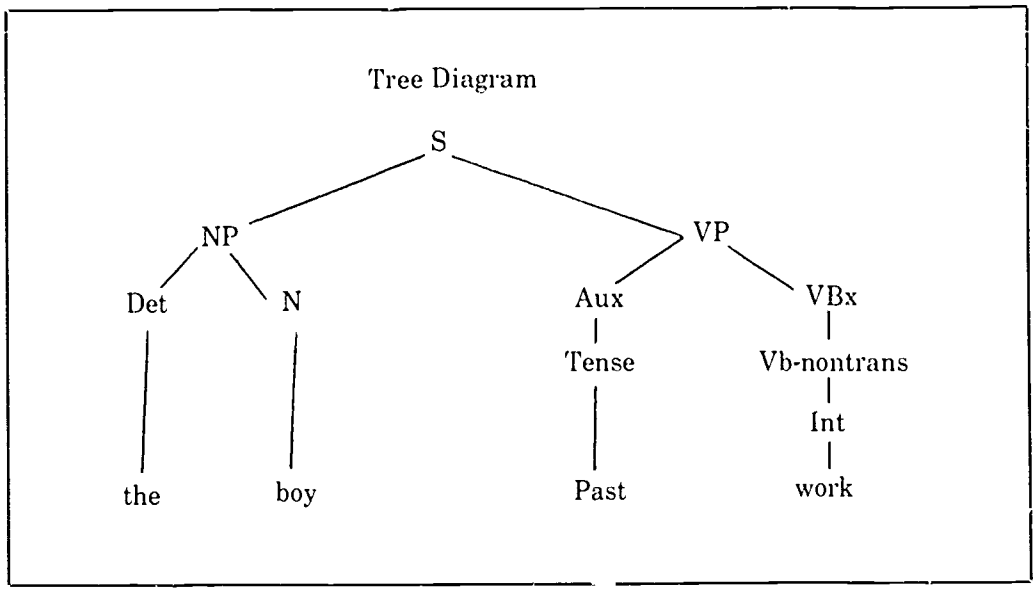
When grammarians realized that learning traditional grammar which is taken from Latin grammar had no effect on improving students' oral or written language skills, work was begun by many scholars to find an effective method to improve our understanding of written and spoken languge. Sentence-combining, an outgrowth of transformational grammar, is one of the few techniques that has a positive correlation to improved writing ability. In 1957 Noam Chomsky published *Syntactic Structures*, this was the beginning of the formulation of generative-transformational grammar which is a grammar system of explicit rules to characterize all the grammatical well-formed sentences possible in our language.

Chomsky reduced all of the sentences in our language to seven basic patterns or kernel sentences. Below is a copy of each of the seven basic sentence patterns and beside each pattern is an example sentence (Walsh & Walsh, 1972, pp. 192–195).

Pattern I	N + V	Boys fight.
Pattern II	(n – d) N + V + (n – d) N	The boys played a game.
Pattern IIIA	NP + VP V + N (n – d) N + V + (n – d) N	Boys become men. The team became the champions.
Pattern IIIB	NP + VP be + N (n – d)N + be + (n – d) N	Whales are mammals. The boy is a halfback.
Pattern IVA	NP + VP V + adj. (n – d)N + V + adj.	The boys got angry. The fur feels soft.
Pattern IVB	VP be + adj. (n – d)N + be + adj.	The eggs were fresh. The heat was uncomfortable.
Pattern V	NP + VP be + adv. (n – d) + be + adv.	The guests are outside. The planes are above.

Although these patterns look complicated, once the symbols are understood it is not difficult to understand. It has been my experience that high school students with a mathematical inclination find these sentence patterns easy to comprehend. For some students these basic sentence patterns make clear to them for the first time the workings of our English language.

Besides the seven basic or kernel sentence patterns Chomsky also developed the *tree diagram* to visually show how any sentence "works." An example of a tree diagram is on the following page. Any sentence in our language can be diagrammed in this manner. Every diagram begins with the letter "S" signifying sentence at the top of the tree. This is a diagram of the sentence: The boy worked. We have a noun phrase consisting of a determiner (i.e., article) plus a noun and a verb phrase consisting of the past tense of the intransitive verb "to work."



Many teachers had difficulty understanding transformational grammar when it was first introduced, and many students had difficulty understanding this revolutionary new method In an attempt to make transformational grammar easier to understand, John Mellon (1969) developed sentences which were placed in groups of two, three, or more and gave them to a group of seventh graders to combine. The individual sentences were followed by signals which used the terminology of transformational grammar. Using this method Mellon's students gained two years of syntactic dexterity in one year!

Frank O'Hare (1973) used a similar method with eighth graders using similar sets of sentences, but instead of giving signals using the terminology of transformational grammar, O'Hare used words in parentheses, capital letters, and underlined words to help students compose their sentences. A sentence is presented below and then repeated using the different methods of signals used by Mellon and O'Hare. Sample sentence:

> The children whom the bombing had orphaned clearly must have wondered how it was humanly possible for their conquerors to pretend that chewing gum and smiles might compensate for the heartbreaking losses which they had so recently sustained.

Mellon's method:

> The children clearly must have wondered SOMETHING
> The bombings had orphaned the children.
> SOMETHING was humanly possible somehow. (T:wh)
> Their conquerors pretended SOMETHING. (T:infin-Texp)
> Chewing gum and smiles might compensate for the losses.
> (T:fact)
> The losses were heartbreaking
> They had so recently sustained the losses.

O'Hare's method:

The children clearly must have wondered SOMETHING.
The bombings had orphaned the children. (WHOM)
SOMETHING was humanly possible somehow. (WHY)
Their conquerors pretended SOMETHING. (IT-FOR-TO)
Chewing gum and smiles might compensate for the losses. (THAT)
The losses were *heartbreaking*
They had so recently sustained the losses. (WHICH)

The results of both O'Hare's and Mellon's studies showed that students who practice sentence-combining techniques regularly regardless of whether they are average, above average, or below average have greater syntactic maturity than students who do not practice sentence-combining.

There are a number of sentence-combining texbooks on the market today. They do not use sentence sets like Mellon used with his seventh graders. Instead these textbooks use exercises similar to O'Hare's sentence sets or they use groups of sentences with no signals at all. Passages from professional authors can also be the basis for combining sentences. Below are some sentences that O'Hare (1978) adapted from well-known authors.

1. Different as they were.
   They were different *in background.* (—)
   They were different *in personality.* (,)
   (Bruce Catton)

2. The girl's face was there.
   It was *really quite beautiful in memory.*
   It was *astonishing in fact.* (:)
   (Ray Bradbury)

3. A white woman stood directly in front of them.
   The white woman was *poised on the edge of the embankment.*
   The embankment was *opposite.*
   Her hat was *in her hand.*
   Her hair was lit by the sun.
   (Richard Wright)

Once students have mastered sentence-combining techniques, they can take sentences from their literature books or other sources and break them down to the kernel sentence. This activity helps students to understand how professional writers construct their work and how language may be used in different patterns.

Sentence-combining can be used with students in the elementary grades as well as with high school and college students. As soon as students begin writing their own sentences they can be given two sentence sets to combine. A group of fourth graders was given these two sentences and asked to combine them into one sentence.

The canary flew out the window
The canary is yellow.

Some students write, "The yellow canary flew out the window," while a few students wrote a compound sentence using *and* or *but* as a conjunction. In addition, a small number of students copied both sentences one after the other on their papers. Interestingly, the remaining students wrote a sentence that read: The canary flew out the yellow window.

The last sentence is incorrect because it changes the sense of the sentence. O'Hare stresses that there is seldom only one correct answer to any sentence-combining problem Students should discuss the suggested combinations rather than the teacher "intoning" the correct answer to each sentence set. Students can learn from combining a sentence and then discussing a number of combinations and deciding which combinations preserve the sense of the original sentence sets.

This sentence set was given to four heterogeneously grouped classes of eleventh grade students.

> Frank dashed into the room
> He lunged at Knuckles.
> He missed.
> He fell in a heap in the corner.

The resulting combinations were written on the blackboard the following day for class discussion. These combinations were among those judged by the classes to be true to the sense of the sentence.

> Frank dashed into the room, lunged at Knuckles, missed, and then fell into a heap in the corner.
>
> After dashing into the room, Frank lunged at Knuckles, missed, and then fell into a heap in the corner.
>
> Dashing into the room, Fred lunged at Knuckles and missed, falling into a heap in the corner.

These combinations were judged not to contain the sense of the sentence. Students were asked to explain what was wrong with each sentence.

> Falling in a heap in the corner, Fred dashed into the room, lunged at Knuckles and missed.
>
> Fred dashed into the room, lunged at the heap in the corner, missed, and fell on Knuckles.
>
> Fred dashed into the room, he lunged at Knuckles and fell in a heap in the corner, he knew he had missed.

This exercise helped students to understand the use of comma, sequence of events, and parallel structure.

As a language arts teacher of average high school juniors, I use sentence-combining exercises regularly with my students. O'Hare's exercises appear monthly in *Scholastic Voice*, and I use other sources for additional exercises. I allow my students to work together on their combinations as I move around the room reading their sentences, offering suggestions, and praising those students whose structures show originality.

I have found that when students realize word order can be changed in a sentence and that two or more sentences can be woven together to create sentence variety, they will take new interest in the arrangement of words. Students may practice their skills by making sentences with an introductory clause, using verbals, or prepositional phrases I put a set of sentences on the blackboard and ask the students to see how many different combinations they can come up

with using one set of sentences. This kind of practice shows them different sentence patterns and how the same words can be used in different patterns. It is much more interesting for students to create their own clauses than to simply identify the clauses from sentences taken from a grammar book.

Sentence-combining exercises should be assigned at regular intervals to give students an opportunity to practice their skills. A set of sentences can be put on the blackboard when there is extra time at the end of the hour, and students can compete to see how many different combinations can be made. Once sentence-combining is mastered, students can move on to analyzing the style of writers such as Faulkner and Fitzgerald, breaking down their complex sentence patterns into simple, basic kernel sentences.

Students can also begin to analyze their own writing when they are aware of the techniques involved in turning repetitious simple sentences into complex sentences with varied patterns rather than the familiar and often boring pattern of subject-verb-object.

Practicing sentence-combining is a hands-on method of teaching the rudiments of English grammar rather than using artificial sentences from a textbook. Through sentence-combining students gain interesting and useful information while learning the skills necessary to manipulate our language to make their writing more interesting.

Try combining these sentence sets to remember the value of sentence combining as a teaching tool:

Sentence-combining is not a panacea.
Sentence-combining is a tool.
A tool to help students.
A tool to understand the intricacies of the English language.
A tool to understand the working of the English language.
A tool to make more mature sentences.
A tool to rewrite their own papers.
Finally, sentence-combining is fun!

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Synthesizing Communication Skills in the English Classroom

Alice Gregg
Okay High School

Although I am the teacher, I learned a lesson from my students today. I learned something that displeased me greatly.

During the summer I teach Upward Bound, a federally sponsored program for capable students that encourages them to continue their education. Two of the main objectives of my summer English classes are to sharpen skills and to improve performance for the regular classes in the fall. Since test taking is an important skill, I included it in my lesson plan. The students had spent two days reading and studying an article on Al Oerter, America's only four time gold medal winner of consecutive Olympiads. Today I demonstrated Bill Rose's mnemonic learning devices to incorporate facts learned in the reading assignment. I tried to accent that these devices could assist students in learning information presented in any classroom situation. The students shook their heads.

"We don't ever have tests that ask us to write stuff. We just have multiple choice questions."

"In our school we just have grammar one semester and read stories the other."

"But doesn't your teacher ask questions about the information in the stories or background information you've read?" I asked.

"No, we never do nothing like that. We just read them and take a multiple choice test. I guess at the answers."

"Yeah, That's easy. Half the time I don't even read the story."

"At our school we study parts of speech and capital letters and junk like that. Our teacher never has us write."

That was the unfortunate lesson I learned today. Our students are not learning what they need to know in the English classroom. The study of grammar apart from everything else does not teach students what they need to know. Reading literature without writing is sterile learning, for students have no opportunity to incorporate what they have learned. What I propose (and teach) is a synthesis of all the necessary communication skills. English should be a study of literature, vocabulary, grammar, writing, speaking, listening, oral reading, and discussion, all integrated in a complete unit of study. How much more meaningful is study of this nature to students! Through synthesis, students are asked to write about what they have learned in this reading using words they have studied in vocabulary and applying usage skills learned in the grammar lesson. They are asked to report orally and in writing what they have learned, and they are able to see the importance of what they have learned and relate it to other learning.

The purpose of this paper is to encourage integration of learning in the English classroom by presenting a typical unit of learning which incorporates all of the above mentioned skills.

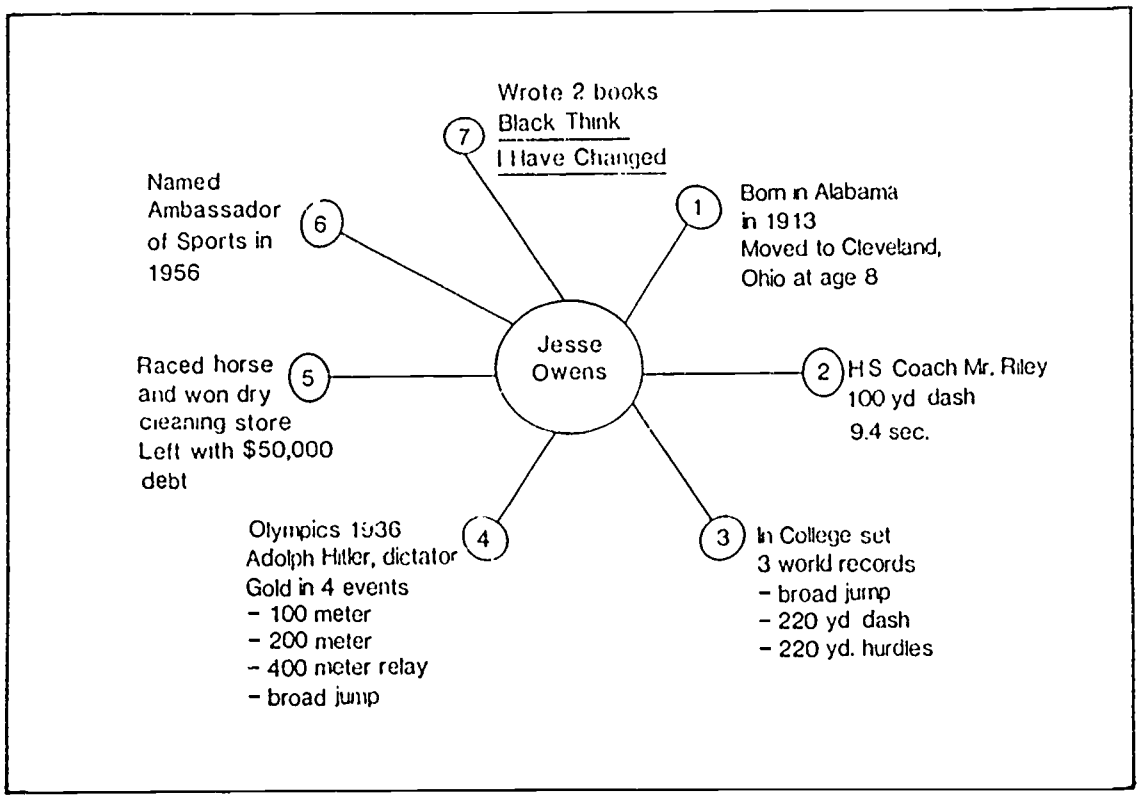
The unit can be thematic or chronological or structural. What is important is not what students read but what they are asked to do with their reading. In the regular classroom, literature texts would be used along with the grammar texts. Writing and vocabulary would come from the reading which would also reinforce grammar skills. Even in school where books are shared and one teacher must exchange grammar books for literature books at the end of the first semester, a synthesized unit can be maintained. Grammar can be taught without a text using workbook sheets and mimeographed materials. Literature can be taught with the use of literary magazines such as *Voice*, *Literary Cavalcade*, and *Scope*. Magazines also provide excellent writing ideas along with the story content. Another source of reading material for the so-called "grammar semester" is the newspaper. Interesting writing assignments, discussions, and vocabulary lessons can originate from the daily newspaper (During the school year I have a classroom supply of newspapers delivered weekly, and all of my students read and write from the newspapers each week.) An easily accessible source of reading material is a set of old textbooks saved when new books are ordered. Several of the richer school systems purchase books in a four year cycle, and these systems will supply anyone who requests the books, in fact, they are happy when someone can save the books from the trash heap. Because these books have seen limited use, they are in "mint" condition. I also have classroom collections of poetry, short story anthologies, and paperback books. There is no end to what a teacher can find for reading material if another class is using the literature textbooks.

In the synthesized unit I generally begin with a grammar lesson. I decided this summer to accent possessives, dialogue, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, outlining, and letter writing, all skills that are common trouble points for students.

I began each week by teaching a grammar skill giving sample sentences and having students write original sentences using the specific skill. In the summer program I have no texts, so I create my own grammar rules and sample sentences; however, asking students to write sentences employing the skill is always a much better test of understanding, than just inserting corrections in text presented sentences.

I also gave homework (usually a mimeographed work sheet) to reinforce classroom learning. The next day after correcting the homework together (another learning situation), I asked the students to read an essay or short story or play which incorporated the theme. Because of the Olympics, my students read about Olympic heroes this summer. During the reading I pointed out the use of the grammar skill in the reading assignment. I also pointed out vocabulary words as we read, and at certain points reviewed factual information. After finishing the article, we discussed questions concerning values suggested in the material. Values in this particular unit included winning and losing, helping an opponent or injuring him, recognizing prejudice, and international brotherhood. Clarifying values by writing of a similar incident and then sharing that writing with others provides discussion and oral skills practice.

In the six weeks of class we read these selections: "History of the Olympic Games" in *Guiness Book of Olympic Records*, "Jesse Owens" in *American Themes Workbook*, "Al Oerter of the United States" in *Great Sports Heroes*, "Running Brave" in *Voice* Magazine, and "The Miracle of '52" in *Time*. In teaching note taking and listening skills, I also read aloud an essay about Jim Thorpe in *Comprehension and Composition, An Introduction to the Essay*. In addition, I asked students to devise three mnemonic devices to retain the facts learned about each of the famous Olympic athletes. For example, Karla developed this web to remember facts about Jessie Owens.



They also wrote an outline and subsequent report, a letter, a dialogue, and an essay on whether winning gold was important to America (a contest sponsored by Stuart Hall Notebooks). The students also wrote two personal essays entitled "How Anger Has Affected My Life" and "How I Met Prejudice." Both of these essays followed a discussion of values brought up after reading about Jesse Owens and the prejudices he felt as a black athlete and how his anger toward Hitler's attitude almost cost him the gold medal.

During these writings, I conferenced with students to review use of quotation marks, to request a specific number of complex or compound sentences, and to be sure they were using the vocabulary learned in reading.

Examples of writing assignments that emphasize grammar skills are the following:

1. **Apostrophe**: Write about something you owned that you didn't want to give up.
2. **Quotation Marks**: Pretend you are interviewing an Olympic hero. Write an article including both your questions and the Olympian's answers.
3. **Letter Writing**: Write a letter to the Olympic Torch Committee, the President of the United States, or your Senator expressing your opinion about the $3000 charge to carry the torch one kilometer.

   Note: Whatever your reason in writing the letters, make sure you send them. I have two methods of making sure the letters are good enough to send. If there is no hurry, I correct

and return them to the students who then must recopy and return them in stamped envelopes. No grade is awarded until the letter is returned. If the message is timely, I stack the letters by color of ink. If I can insert a comma or correct a misspelling without it being obvious, then I do so, using the same color ink. If the letter contains too many errors, I discard it; the rest I send. For this I do not give grades; sending the letter and having it printed in a newspaper or receiving an answer is sufficient reward.

4. **Outlining**: Outline an athlete's life.
5. **Reports**: Develop the outline into a report. This is an excellent method to keep students from copying directly from the text or other resource. Making sure that students follow the outline and not the text is the essential element. I grade many times on this alone.
6. **Essay**: Write an essay about winning using the vocabulary we have discussed.
7. **Essay**: Write an essay about a sport you enjoy and use five sentences beginning with a dependent clause. These activities can be altered for any punctuation or grammar skill. Make sure, however, that your students underline what they were required to include so you can easily pick it out from the rest of the writing. Be careful not to require too much. Don't ask for compound and complex sentences in the same piece of writing. If you do ask for several different items, it is best that the original sentences be numbered and labeled correctly. Only in this manner will you know if students intended what they included in their writing.

Jesse Stuart, America's great Appalachian teacher, recommended that learning be fun, and I try to make it fun as well as relevant. To reinforce learning I developed a game called Jeopardy (see Appendix 1) to test students on Olympic facts and vocabulary knowledge. Categories for this theme included history, geography, vocabulary, American athletes, foreign athletes, and cities. Within each category there were ten questions increasingly more difficult and higher in point value. A similar game can be developed for any group of facts.

For various reasons Oklahoma schools often divide English class into two semesters, grammar and literature. Too often teachers will teach just grammar for one long semester, allowing students to go without any writing or vocabulary study. Students will not be asked to read or interpret or evaluate or analyze or write. In turn, during the literature semester all mention of grammar is forgotten. Students read and answer questions, and read some more. Other skills are also forgotten or eliminated. This is not, however, what English study should be.

We must somehow incorporate all phases of communication into each semester of learning. We must encourage teachers to synthesize. We must demand more writing in classrooms. We must eliminate the separate semesters concept so that all phases of the communication skills are taught and taught as valuable assets one to another.

I learned something today. And it was a valuable lesson, too.

Directions for Jeopardy

Draw a chart similar to the one illustrated below on the chalkboard. Ask students to choose teams and elect spokespersons. They choose the category and the difficulty, and the teacher asks a question. If they miss, the other team has opportunity for double points to answer the missed question. If no one answers, the teacher gives the answer. Teams continue answering until they miss. As categories and points are selected, the teacher marks them out.

CITIES	AMERICAN ATHLETES	FOREIGN ATHLETES	GEOGRAPHY	HISTORY
10	10	10	10	10
20	20	20	20	20
30	30	30	30	30
40	40	40	40	40
50	50	50	50	50
60	60	60	60	60
70	70	70	70	70
80	80	80	80	80
90	90	90	90	90
100	100	100	100	100

Sample Questions for American Athletes:

10 Name the American who proved to Hitler that black athletes could beat German athletes.
20 Name the American athlete who won two gold medals but lost them when he was discovered to have played professional ball.
30 Name the last American to have won the Decathalon.
40 Name the American swimmer who holds the record for the most gold medals at one Olympics.
50 Name the American ice skater who won a gold medal at the 1984 Olympics.
60 Name the American who holds the world record for the broad jump.
70 Name the only American to have won his event in four succeeding Olympics.
80 Name the president who boycotted the 1932 Olympics.
90 Name the American woman who was named the best female athlete of the 1900's.
100 Name the American who accepted a five mile lift while running the marathon in the 1904.

Note. Depending on the unit studied, any set of categories and any set of questions will serve as review for a unit test. It is also possible to have students devise the game's questions for individual study plans.

Student Essays

Essay: On Anger
Grammar requirement: Punctuating compound and complex sentences

The whistle blew, and the foul was called on me. We had ten seconds left to play. The score was tied, and the other team had one free shot.

As the girl came up on the free-throw line, she whispered, "This one is for you!"

I looked up at her with a mean look. I was boiling mad.

She took the ball and shot. It went straight up. She turned and smiled.

I really wanted to hit her.

I took the ball and threw it to one of the forwards, but I had overthrown it. The other team had the ball once again. Their leading foward who had the ball went up for the shot and made it.

The buzzer rang, and the game was over. We had lost by three points. I thought it was all my fault. If I hadn't overthrown the ball, we might have won. But I had let my anger control me, and we lost.

Sherry C.

Essay: On Prejudice
Grammar requirement: Dialogue

There was a bulletin on the board that read "There will be practice today around 5 P.M. Meet at the softball field."

I read the bulletin and walked toward Kathy. "Kathy, are you going to play softball?"

"Sure, I'm going to play first."

"I want to play shortstop if they'll let me."

"See you then. I got to go to class."

The day went by fast, and 5 P.M. rolled around. I walked down to the field, and Kathy and Shayne were already there.

"Where's Coach?"

"He's coming."

Bob walked onto the field and said, "Take your places." I went to shortstop and just stood there.

"Kelly, I don't think you can play shortstop. There's a lot of boys that will hit the ball hard."

"Coach, I can handle it."

"Maybe we should put a boy there."

"At least give me a chance."

"OK, but if you make a mistake, we'll put someone else there."

The day of the game came around, and I was scared. I walked to my spot, and immediately the ball was hit straight to me.

"I got it."

"I picked it up and threw it to first. I overthrew it. I just knew I would be pulled out. Bob stood there. The next ball was hit straight up. I go right under and yelled, "I got it." The ball went right in my glove.

"Good catch," Shayne said.

I could hear my team mates yell, "Good job!" "Way to be!" "Super catch!"

After the game everyone was busy picking up his mess. I walked up to Bob and said, "Not bad, hey!"

"Well, not bad for a girl."

Kelly R.

THE OKLAHOMA WRITING PROJECT

The Project

The Oklahoma Writing Project (OWP), which began on January 1, 1978, is modeled after the successful Bay Area Writing Project. That Project was developed in 1974 by a group of writing instructors at the University of California, Berkeley, to reduce the number of high school students who have difficulty expressing themselves in writing. From this modest beginning has come a National Writing Project with over 125 sites throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and Asia.

Much of the growth of the National Writing Project has been underwritten by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The NEH encouraged the establishment of similar projects across the nation, and the OWP was one of the early members of this network. In addition to the support from the NEH, the Oklahoma Writing Project has received grants from the Kerr Foundation, the OU Associates and the University of Oklahoma Foundation.

The purpose of the OWP is to improve the teaching of written composition in Oklahoma schools, kindergarten through college levels. The OWP follows the Bay Area Writing Project model in which successful teachers of composition are selected to attend a Summer Institute held at the University of Oklahoma. During the Institute, the teachers demonstrate successful teaching strategies and develop in-service presentations. Following the Institute, they become a corps of Teacher/Consultants who are ready to present effective writing strategies during in-service workshops in schools across the state of Oklahoma.

Summer Institutes

Summer Institutes have been held since 1978 at the University of Oklahoma. Now the OWP has a corps of over 100 Teacher/Consultants representing a wide range of specializations. Teachers of English/language arts at all levels of instruction, kindergarten through college, who have special expertise in teaching writing are invited to apply for upcoming Summer Institutes. Information and application blanks are available from the OWP Director after January 1st of each year, and completed applications must be returned in March. Two new summer programs, a Second Year Summer Institute for Experienced Teacher/Consultants and an Open Program for Teachers were begun in 1984.

Inservice Workshops

School districts may arrange inservice workshops for their teachers. The participants of the Summer Institutes serve as Teacher/Consultants and make presentations at inservice sessions. Their programs reflect teaching strategies which they have used successfully in their own classrooms. The sessions are usually three hours long, and workshops may offer any number of sessions, five or ten being the most popular. OU graduate credit is optional. During 1983–84, more than 150 elementary and secondary teachers participated in workshops held in Oklahoma City, Cherokee, Chickasha, and Broken Arrow.

For Further Information

For further information, please call or write to Dr. Gail Tompkins, Director, Oklahoma Writing Project, College of Education, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 73019; telephone 405/325-4204 or Ms. Claudette Goss, Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2500 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105; telephone 405/521-3361.